











LITERARY PERSPECTIVES No. 4

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*B. RAJAN • A. G. GEORGE*

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MAKERS OF LITERARY CRITICISM

VOLUME ONE

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*Makers of Literary Criticism*, Vol. II, compiled and edited by B. Rajan  
and A. G. George

# Makers of Literary Criticism

*Compiled and edited by*

B. RAJAN, M.A., PH.D. (CANTAB.)

A. G. GEORGE, PH.D.

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VOLUME  
ONE

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## FOREWORD

AN ATTEMPT has been made in *Makers of Literary Criticism* (three volumes) to present an easily traversible anthology of literary criticism by the inclusion of critical masterpieces from Plato to the present age arranged chronologically. This is not a mere anthology of important excerpts from literary criticism, but consists of either complete works, or of complete chapters selected from works which are too long to go into an anthology. This feature of *Makers of Literary Criticism* distinguishes it from other anthologies published in India. Another distinguishing feature is the unusually generous selection that is provided of those authors who are represented, thus enabling the reader to form a more adequate idea of the nature and extent of their critical achievement.

It is hoped in the future to provide (in the third volume) a commentary keyed to the texts in such a way that it cannot be read without the salutary exercise of consulting the texts themselves. The main issues of literary criticism ought to be seen as arising from and developing through its history ; and the graduate student in particular, should be made continually aware of this connection. The Editors hope, that with these features *Makers of Literary Criticism* will be welcome both to the general reader and to the advanced student of critical theories.

B. RAJAN

A. G. GEORGE



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# PLATO

## FROM *The Republic*

### BOOK X

OF THE many excellences which I perceive in the order of our State, there is none which upon reflection pleases me better than the rule about poetry.

To what do you refer ?

To the rejection of imitative poetry, which certainly ought not to be received ; as I see far more clearly now that the parts of the soul have been distinguished.

What do you mean ?

Speaking in confidence, for I should not like to have my words repeated to the tragedians and the rest of the imitative tribe—but I do not mind saying to you, that all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them.

Explain the purport of your remark.

Well, I will tell you, although I have always from my earliest youth had an awe and love of Homer, which even now makes the words falter on my lips, for he is the great captain and teacher of the whole of that charming tragic company ; but a man is not to be revered more than the truth, and therefore I will speak out.

Very good, he said.

Listen to me then, or rather, answer me.

Put your question.

Can you tell me what imitation is ? For I really do not know.

A likely thing, then, that I should know.

Why not ? for the duller eye may often see a thing sooner than the keener.

Very true, he said ; but in your presence, even if I had any faint notion, I could not muster courage to utter it. Will you enquire yourself ?

Well then, shall we begin the enquiry in our usual manner : whenever a number of individuals have a common name, we assume them to have also a corresponding idea or form—do you understand me ?

I do.

Let us take any common instance ; there are beds and tables in the world—plenty of them, are there not ?

Yes.

But there are only two ideas or forms of them—one the idea of a bed, the other of a table.

True.

And the maker of either of them makes a bed or he makes a table for our use, in accordance with the idea—that is our way of speaking in this and similar instances—but no artificer makes the ideas themselves : how could he ?

Impossible.

And there is another artist—I should like to know what you would say of him.

Who is he ?

One who is the maker of all the works of all other workmen.

What an extraordinary man !

Wait a little, and there will be more reason for your saying so. For this is he who is able to make not only vessels of every kind, but plants and animals, himself and all other things—the earth and heaven, and the things which are in heaven or under the earth ; he makes the gods also.

He must be a wizard and no mistake.

Oh ! you are incredulous, are you ? Do you mean that there is no such maker or creator, or that in one sense there might be a maker of all these things but in another not ? Do you see that there is a way in which you could make them all yourself ?

What way ?

An easy way enough ; or rather, there are many ways in which the feat might be quickly and easily accomplished, none quicker than that of turning a mirror round and round—you would soon enough make the sun and the heavens, and the earth and yourself, and other animals and plants, and all the other things of which we were just now speaking, in the mirror.

Yes, he said ; but they would be appearances only.

Very good, I said, you are coming to the point now. And the painter too is, as I conceive, just such another—a creator of appearances, is he not ?

Of course.

But then I suppose you will say that what he creates is untrue. And yet there is a sense in which the painter also creates a bed ?

Yes, he said, but not a real bed.

And what of the maker of the bed ? Were you not saying that he too makes, not the idea which, according to our view, is the essence of the bed, but only a particular bed ?

Yes, I did.

Then if he does not make that which exists he cannot make true existence, but only some semblance of existence ; and if any one were to say that the work of the maker of the bed, or of any other workman, has real existence, he could hardly be supposed to be speaking the truth.

At any rate, he replied, philosophers would say that he was not speaking the truth.

No wonder, then that his work too is an indistinct expression of truth.

No wonder.

Suppose now that by the light of the examples just offered we enquire who this imitator is ?

If you please.

Well then, here are three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God, as I think that we may say—for no one else can be the maker ?

No.

There is another which is the work of the carpenter ?

Yes.

And the work of the painter is a third ?

Yes.

Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter ?

Yes, there are three of them.

God, whether from choice or from necessity, made one bed in nature and one only ; two or more such ideal beds neither ever have been nor ever will be made by God.

Why is that ?

Because even if He had made but two, a third would still appear behind them which both of them would have for their idea, and that would be the ideal bed and not the two others.

Very true, he said.

God knew this, and He desired to be the real maker of a real bed, not a particular maker of a particular bed, and therefore He created a bed which is essentially and by nature one only.

So we believe.

Shall we, then, speak of Him as the natural author or maker of the bed ?

Yes, he replied ; inasmuch as by the natural process of creation He is the author of this and of all other things.

And what shall we say of the carpenter—is not he also the maker of the bed ?

Yes.

But would you call the painter a creator and maker ?

Certainly not.

Yes if he is not the maker, what is he in relation to the bed ?

I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator of that which the others make.

Good, I said ; then you call him who is third in the descent from nature an imitator ?

Certainly, he said.

And the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth ?

That appears to be so.

Then about the imitator we are agreed. And what about the painter ?—I would like to know whether he may be thought to imitate that which originally exists in nature, or only the creations of artists ?

The latter.

As they are or as they appear ? You have still to determine this.

What do you mean ?

I mean, that you may look at a bed from different points of view, obliquely or directly or from any other point of view, and the bed will appear different, but there is no difference in reality. And the same of all things.

Yes, he said, the difference is only apparent.

Now let me ask you another question: which is the art of painting designed to be—an imitation of things as they are, or as they appear—of appearance or of reality?

Of appearance.

Then the imitator, I said, is a long way off the truth, and can do all things because he lightly touches on a small part of them, and that part an image. For example: a painter will paint a cobbler, carpenter, or any other artist, though he knows nothing of their arts; and, if he is a good artist, he may deceive children or simple persons, when he shows them his picture of a carpenter from a distance, and they will fancy that they are looking at a real carpenter.

Certainly.

And whenever any one informs us that he has found a man who knows all the arts, and all things else that anybody knows, and every single thing with a higher degree of accuracy than any other man—whoever tells us this, I think that we can only imagine him to be a simple creature who is likely to have been deceived some wizard or actor whom he met, and whom he thought all-knowing, because he himself was unable to analyse the nature of knowledge and ignorance and imitation.

Most true.

And so, when we hear persons saying that the tragedians, and Homer, who is at their head, know all the arts and all things human, virtue as well as vice, and divine things too, for that the good poet cannot compose well unless he knows his subject, and that he who has not this knowledge can never be a poet, we ought to consider whether here also there may not be a similar illusion. Perhaps they may have come across imitators and been deceived by them; they may not have remembered when they saw their works that these were but imitations thrice removed from the truth, and could easily be made without any knowledge of the truth, because they are appearances only and not realities? Or, after all, they may be in the right, and poets do really know the things about which they seem to the many to speak so well?

The question, he said, should by all means be considered.

Now do you suppose that if a person were able to make the original as well as the image, he would seriously devote himself to the image-making branch? Would he allow imitation to be the ruling principle of his life, as if he had nothing higher in him?

I should say not.

The real artist, who knew what he was imitating, would be interested in realities and not in imitations; and would desire to leave as memorials of himself works many and fair; and, instead of being the author of encomiums, he would prefer to be the theme of them.

Yes, he said, that would be to him a source of much greater honour and profit.

Then, I said, we must put a question to Homer ; not about medicine, or any of the arts to which his poems only incidentally refer : we are not going to ask him, or any other poet, whether he has cured patients like Asclepius, or left behind him a school of medicine such as the Asclepiads were, or whether he only talks about medicine and other arts at second-hand ; but we have a right to know respecting military tactics, politics, education, which are the chiefest and noblest subjects of his poems, and we may fairly ask him about them. " Friend Homer," then we say to him, " if you are only in the second remove from truth in what you say of virtue, and not in the third—not an image maker or imitator—and if you are able to discern what pursuits make men better or worse in private or public life, tell us what State was ever better governed by your help ? The good order of Lacedaemon is due to Lycurgus, and many other cities great and small have been similarly benefited by others ; but who says that you have been a good legislator to them and have done them any good ? Italy and Sicily boast of Charondas, and there is Solon who is renowned among us ; but what city has anything to say about you ?" Is there any city which he might name ?

I think not, said Glaucon ; not even the Homerids themselves pretend that he was a legislator.

Well, but is there any war on record which was carried on successfully by him, or aided by his counsels, when he was alive ?

There is not.

Or is there any invention of his, applicable to the arts or to human life, such as Thales the Milesian or Anacharsis the Scythian, and other ingenious men have conceived, which is attributed to him ?

There is absolutely nothing of the kind.

But, if Homer never did any public service, was he privately a guide or teacher of any ? Had he in his lifetime friends who loved to associate with him, and who handed down to posterity an Homeric way of life, such as was established by Pythagoras who was so greatly beloved for his wisdom, and whose followers are to this day quite celebrated for the order which was named after him ?

Nothing of the kind is recorded of him. For surely, Socrates, Creophylus, the companion of Homer, that child of flesh, whose name always makes us laugh, might be more justly ridiculed for his stupidity, if, as is said, Homer was greatly neglected by him and others in his own day when he was alive ?

Yes, I replied, that is the tradition. But can you imagine, Glaucon, that if Homer had really been able to educate and improve mankind—if he had possessed knowledge and not been a mere imitator—can you imagine, I say, that he would not have had many followers, and been honoured and loved by them ? Protagoras of Abdera, and Prodicus of Ceos, and a host of others, have only to whisper to their contemporaries : " You will never be able to manage

either your own house or your own State until you appoint us to be your ministers of education"—and this ingenious device of theirs has such an effect in making men love them that their companions all but carry them about on their shoulders. And is it conceivable that the contemporaries of Homer, or again of Hesiod, would have allowed either of them to go about as rhapsodists, if they had really been able to make mankind virtuous? Would they not have been as unwilling to part with them as with gold, and have compelled them to stay at home with them? Or, if the master would not stay, then the disciples would have followed him about everywhere, until they had got education enough?

Yes, Socrates, that, I think, is quite true.

Then must we not infer that all these poetical individuals, beginning with Homer, are only imitators; they copy images of virtue and the like, but the truth they never reach? The poet is like a painter who, as we have already observed, will make a likeness of a cobbler though he understands nothing of cobbling; and his picture is good enough for those who know no more than he does, and judge only by colours and figures.

Quite so.

In like manner the poet with his words and phrases may be said to lay on the colours of the several arts, himself understanding their nature only enough to imitate them; and other people, who are as ignorant as he is, and judge only from his words, imagine that if he speaks of cobbling, or of military tactics, or of anything else, in metre and harmony and rhythm, he speaks very well—such is the sweet influence which melody and rhythm by nature have. And I think that you must have observed again and again what a poor appearance the tales of poets make when stripped of the colours which music puts upon them, and recited in simple prose.

Yes, he said.

They are like faces which were never really beautiful, but only blooming; and now the bloom of youth has passed away from them?

Exactly.

Here is another point: The imitator or maker of the image knows nothing of true existence; he knows appearances only. Am I not right?

Yes.

Then let us have a clear understanding, and not be satisfied with half an explanation.

Proceed.

Of the painter we say that he will paint reins, and he will paint a bit?

Yes.

And the worker in leather and brass will make them?

Certainly.

But does the painter know the right form of the bit and reins? Nay, hardly even the workers in brass and leather who make them; only the horseman who knows how to use them—he knows their right form.

Most true.

And may we not say the same of all things ?

What ?

That there are three arts which are concerned with all things : one which uses, another which makes, a third which imitates them ?

Yes.

And the excellence or beauty or truth of every structure, animate or inanimate, and of every action of man, is relative to the use for which nature or the artist has intended them.

True.

Then the user of them must have the greatest experience of them, and he must indicate to the maker the good or bad qualities which develop themselves in use ; for example, the flute-player will tell the flute-maker which of his flutes is satisfactory to the performer ; he will tell him how he ought to make them, and the other will attend to his instructions ?

Of course.

The one knows and therefore speaks with authority about the goodness and badness of flutes, while the other, confiding in him, will do what he is told by him ?

True.

The instrument is the same, but about the excellence or badness of it the maker will only attain to a correct belief ; and this he will gain from him who knows, by talking to him and being compelled to hear what he has to say, whereas the user will have knowledge ?

True.

But will the imitator have either ? Will he know from use whether or no his drawing is correct or beautiful ? Or will he have right opinion from being compelled to associate with another who knows and gives him instructions about what he should draw ?

Neither.

Then he will no more have true opinion than he will have knowledge about the goodness or badness of his imitations ?

I suppose not.

The imitative artist will be in a brilliant state of intelligence about his own creations ?

Nay, very much the reverse.

And still he will go on imitating without knowing what makes a thing good or bad, and may be expected therefore to imitate only that which appears to be good to the ignorant multitude ?

Just so.

Thus far then we are pretty well agreed that the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning of what he imitates. Imitation is only a kind of play or sport, and the tragic poets, whether they write in Iambic or in Heroic verse, are imitators in the highest degree ?

Very true.

And now tell me, I conjure you, has not imitation been shown by us to be concerned with that which is thrice removed from the truth ?

Certainly.

And what is the faculty in man to which imitation is addressed ?

What do you mean ?

I will explain : the body which is large when seen near, appears small when seen at a distance ?

True.

And the same object appears straight when looked at out of the water, and crooked when in the water ; and the concave becomes convex, owing to the illusion about colours to which the sight is liable. Thus every sort of confusion is revealed within us ; and this is that weakness of the human mind on which the art of conjuring and of deceiving by light and shadow and other ingenious devices imposes, having an effect upon us like magic.

True.

And the arts of measuring and numbering and weighing come to the rescue of the human understanding—there is the beauty of them—and the apparent greater or less, or more or heavier, no longer have the mastery over us, but give way before calculation and measure and weight ?

Most true.

And this, surely, must be the work of the calculating and rational principle in the soul ?

To be sure.

And when this principle measures and certifies that some things are equal, or that some are greater or less than others, there occurs an apparent contradiction ?

True.

But were we not saying that such a contradiction is impossible—the same faculty cannot have contrary opinions at the same time about the same thing ?

Very true.

Then that part of the soul which has an opinion contrary to measure is not the same with that which has an opinion in accordance with measure ?

True.

And the better part of the soul is likely to be that which trusts to measure and calculation ?

Certainly.

And that which is opposed to them is one of the inferior principles of the soul ?

No doubt.

This was the conclusion at which I was seeking to arrive when I said that painting or drawing, and imitation in general, when doing their own proper work, are far removed from truth, and the companions and friends and associates of a principle within us which is equally removed from reason, and that they have no true or healthy aim.

Exactly.



The imitative art is an inferior who marries an inferior, and has inferior offspring.

Very true.

And is this confined to the sight only, or does it extend to the hearing also, relating in fact to what we term poetry ?

Probably the same would be true of poetry.

Do not rely, I said, on a probability derived from the analogy of painting ; but let us examine further and see whether the faculty with which poetical imitation is concerned is good or bad.

By all means.

We may state the question thus: imitation imitates the actions of men, whether voluntary or involuntary, on which, as they imagine, a good or bad result has ensued, and they rejoice or sorrow accordingly. Is there anything more ?

No, there is nothing else.

But in all this variety of circumstances is the man at unity with himself—or rather, as in the instance of sight there was confusion and opposition in his opinions about the same things, so here also is there not strife and inconsistency in his life ? Though I need hardly raise the question again, for I remember that all this has been already admitted, and the soul has been acknowledged by us to be full of these and ten thousand similar oppositions occurring at the same moment ?

And we were right, he said.

Yes, I said, thus far we were right ; but there was an omission which must now be supplied.

What was the omission ?

Were we not saying that a good man, who has the misfortune to lose his son or anything else which is most dear to him, will bear the loss with more equanimity than another ?

Yes.

But will he have no sorrow, or shall we say that although he cannot help sorrowing, he will moderate his sorrow ?

The latter, he said, is the truer statement.

Tell me : will he be more likely to struggle and hold out against his sorrow when he is seen by his equals, or when he is alone ?

It will make a great difference whether he is seen or not.

When he is by himself he will not mind saying or doing many things which he would be ashamed of any one hearing or seeing him do ?

True.

There is a principle of law and reason in him which bids him resist, as well as a feeling of his misfortune which is forcing him to indulge his sorrow ?

True.

But when a man is drawn in two opposite directions, to and from the same object, this, as we affirm, necessarily implies two distinct principles in him ?

Certainly.

One of them is ready to follow the guidance of the law ?

How do you mean ?

The law would say that to be patient under suffering is best, and that we should not give way to impatience, as there is no knowing whether such things are good or evil ; and nothing is gained by impatience ; also, because no human thing is of serious importance, and grief stands in the way of that which at the moment is most required.

What is most required ? he asked.

That we should take counsel about what has happened, and when the dice have been thrown, order our affairs in the way which reason deems best ; not, like children who have had a fall, keeping hold of the part struck and wasting time in setting up a howl, but always accustoming the soul forthwith to apply a remedy, raising up that which is sickly and fallen, banishing the cry of sorrow by the healing art

Yes, he said, that is the true way of meeting the attacks of fortune.

Yes, I said ; and the higher principle is ready to follow this suggestion of reason ?

Clearly.

And the other principle, which inclines us to recollection of our troubles and to lamentation, and can never have enough of them, we may call irrational, useless, and cowardly ?

Indeed, we may.

And does not the latter—I mean the rebellious principle—furnish a great variety of materials for imitation ? Whereas the wise and calm temperament, being always nearly equable, is not easy to imitate or to appreciate when imitated, especially at a public festival when a promiscuous crowd is assembled in a theatre. For the feeling represented is one to which they are strangers.

Certainly.

Then the imitative poet who aims at being popular is not by nature made, nor is his art intended, to please or to affect the rational principle in the soul ; but he will prefer the passionate and fitful temper, which is easily imitated ?

Clearly.

And now we may fairly take him and place him by the side of the painter, for he is like him in two ways : first, inasmuch as his creations have an inferior degree of truth—in this, I say, he is like him ; and he is also like him in being concerned with an inferior part of the soul ; and therefore we shall be right in refusing to admit him into a well-ordered State, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason. As in a city when the evil are permitted to have authority and the good are put out of the way, so in the soul of man, as we maintain, the imitative poet implants an evil constitution, for he indulges the irrational nature which has no discernment of greater and less, but thinks the same thing at one time great and at another small—he is a manufacturer of images and is very far removed from the truth.

Exactly.

But we have not yet brought forward the heaviest count in our accusation—the power which poetry has of harming even the good (and there are very few who are not harmed), is surely an awful thing ?

Yes, certainly, if the effect is what you say.

Hear and judge : the best of us, as I conceive, when we listen to a passage of Homer, or one of the tragedians, in which he represents some pitiful hero who is drawling out his sorrows in a long oration, or weeping, and smiting his breast—the best of us, you know, delight in giving way to sympathy, and are in raptures at the excellence of the poet who stirs our feelings most.

Yes, of course I know.

But when any sorrow of our own happens to us, then you may observe that we pride ourselves on the opposite quality—we would fain be quiet and patient ; this is the manly part, and the other which delighted us in the recitation is now deemed to be the part of a woman.

Very true, he said.

Now can we be right in praising and admiring another who is doing that which anyone of us would abominate and be ashamed of in his own person ?

No, he said, that is certainly not reasonable

Nay, I said, quite reasonable from one point of view.

What point of view ?

If you consider, I said, that when in misfortune we feel a natural hunger and desire to relieve our sorrow by weeping and lamentation, and that this feeling which is kept under control in our own calamities is satisfied and delighted by the poets—the better nature in each of us, not having been sufficiently trained by reason or habit, allows the sympathetic element to break loose because the sorrow is another's ; and the spectator fancies that there can be no disgrace to himself in praising and pitying anyone who comes telling him what a good man he is, and making a fuss about his troubles ; he thinks that the pleasure is a gain, and why should he be supercilious and lose this and the poem too ? Few persons ever reflect, as I should imagine, that from the evil of other men something of evil is communicated to themselves. And so the feeling of sorrow which has gathered strength at the sight of the misfortunes of others is with difficulty repressed in our own.

How very true !

And does not the same hold also of the ridiculous ? There are jests which you would be ashamed to make yourself, and yet on the comic stage, or indeed in private, when you hear them, you are greatly amused by them, and are not at all disgusted at their unseemliness—the case of pity is repeated—there is a principle in human nature which is disposed to raise a laugh, and this which you once restrained by reason, because you were afraid of being thought a buffoon, is now let out again ; and having stimulated the risible faculty at the theatre, you are betrayed unconsciously to yourself into playing the comic poet at home.

Quite true, he said.

And the same may be said of lust and anger and all the other affections, of desire and pain and pleasure, which are held to be inseparable from every

action—in all of them poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up ; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue.

I cannot deny it.

Therefore, Glaucon, I said, whenever you meet with any of the eulogists of Homer declaring that he has been the educator of Hellas, and that he is profitable for education and for ordering of human things, and that you should take him up again and again and get to know him and regulate your whole life according to him, we may love and honour those who say these things—they are excellent people, as far as their lights extend ; and we are ready to acknowledge that Homer is the greatest of poets and first of tragedy writers ; but we must remain firm in our conviction that hymns to the gods and praises of famous men are the only poetry which ought to be admitted into our State. For if you go beyond this and allow the honeyed muse to enter, either in epic or lyric verse, not law and the reason of mankind, which by common consent have ever been deemed best, but pleasure and pain will be the rulers in our State.

That is most true, he said.

And now since we have reverted to the subject of poetry, let this our defence serve to show the reasonableness of our former judgement in sending away out of our State an art having the tendencies which we have described ; for reason constrained us. But that she may not impute to us any harshness or want of politeness, let us tell her that there is an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry ; of which there are many proofs, such as the saying of "the yelping hound howling at her lord," or of one "mighty in the vain talk of fools," and "the mob of sages circumventing Zeus," and the "subtle thinkers who are beggars after all ;" and there are innumerable other signs of ancient enmity between them. Notwithstanding this, let us assure our sweet friend and the sister arts of imitation, that if she will only prove her title to exist in a well-ordered State we shall be delighted to receive her—we are very conscious of her charms ; but we may not on that account betray the truth. I dare say, Glaucon, that you are as much charmed by her as I am, especially when she appears in Homer ?

Yes, indeed, I am greatly charmed.

Shall I propose, then, that she be allowed to return from exile, but upon this condition only—that she makes a defence of herself in lyrical or some other metre ?

Certainly.

And we may further grant to those of her defenders who are lovers of poetry and yet not poets the permission to speak in prose on her behalf : let them show not only that she is pleasant but also useful to States and to human life, and we will listen in a kindly spirit ; for if this can be proved we shall surely be the gainers—I mean, if there is a use in poetry as well as a delight ?

Certainly, he said, we shall be the gainers.

If her defence fails, then, my dear friend, like other persons who are enamoured of something, but put a restraint upon themselves when they think their desires are opposed to their interests, so too must we after the manner of lovers give her up, though not without a struggle. We too are inspired by that love of poetry which the education of noble States has implanted in us, and therefore we would have her appear at her best and truest ; but so long as she is unable to make good her defence, this argument of ours shall be a charm to us, which we will repeat to ourselves while we listen to her strains ; that we may not fall away into the childish love of her which captivates the many. At all events we are well aware that poetry being such as we have described is not to be regarded seriously as attaining to the truth ; and he who listens to her, fearing for the safety of the city which is within him, should be on his guard against her seductions and make our words his law.

Yes, he said, I quite agree with you.

Yes, I said, my dear Glaucon, for great is the issue at stake, greater than appears, whether a man is to be good or bad. And what will anyone be profited if under the influence of honour or money or power, aye, or under the excitement of poetry, he neglect justice and virtue ?

Yes, he said, I have been convinced by the argument, as I believe that anyone else would have been

And yet no mention has been made of the greatest prizes and rewards which await virtue

What, are there any greater still ? If there are, they must be of an inconceivable greatness.

Why, I said, what was ever great in a short time ? The whole period of three score years and ten is surely but a little thing in comparison with eternity ?

Say rather " nothing," he replied

And should an immortal being seriously think of his little space rather than of the whole ?

Of the whole, certainly. But why do you ask ?

Are you not aware, I said, that the soul of man is immortal and imperishable ?

He looked at me in astonishment, and said : no, by heaven : and are you really prepared to maintain this ?

Yes, I said, I ought to be, and you too—there is no difficulty in proving it.

I see a great difficulty ; but I should like to hear you state this argument of which you make so light.

Listen then.

I am attending.

There is a thing which you call good and another which you call evil ?

Yes, he replied.

Would you agree with me in thinking that the corrupting and destroying element is the evil, and the saving and improving element the good ?

Yes

And you admit that every thing has a good and also an evil ; as ophthalmis is the evil of the eyes and disease of the whole body ; as mildew is of corn. and rot of timber, or rust of copper and iron : in everything, or in almost everything, there is an inherent evil and disease ?

Yes, he said.

And anything which is infected by any of these evils is made evil, and at last wholly dissolves and dies ?

True.

The vice and evil which is inherent in each is the destruction of each ; and if this does not destroy them there is nothing else that will ; for good certainly will not destroy them, nor again, that which is neither good nor evil.

Certainly not.

If, then, we find any nature which having this inherent corruption cannot be dissolved or destroyed, we may be certain that of such a nature there is no destruction ?

That may be assumed.

Well, I said, and is there no evil which corrupts the soul ?

Yes, he said, there are all the evils which we were just now passing in review : unrighteousness, intemperance, cowardice, ignorance

But does any of these dissolve or destroy her ? And here do not let us fall into the error of supposing that the unjust and foolish man, when he is detected, perishes through his own injustice, which is an evil of the soul. Take the analogy of the body : the evil of the body is disease which wastes and reduces and annihilates the body ; and all the things of which we were just now speaking come to annihilation through their own corruption attaching to them and inhering in them and so destroying them. Is not this true ?

Yes.

Consider the soul in like manner. Does the injustice or other evil which exists in the soul waste and consume her ? Do they by attaching to the soul and inhering in her at last bring her to death, and so separate her from the body ?

Certainly not.

And yet, I said, it is unreasonable to suppose that anything can perish from without through affection of external evil which could not be destroyed from within by a corruption of its own ?

It is, he replied.

Consider, I said, Glaucon, that even the badness of food, whether staleness, decomposition, or any other bad quality, when confined to the actual food, is not supposed to destroy the body ; although if the badness of food communicates corruption to the body, then we should say that the body has been destroyed by a corruption of itself, which is disease, brought on by this ; but that the body, being one thing, can be destroyed by the badness of food, which is another, and which does not engender any natural infection—this we shall absolutely deny ?

Very true.

And, on the same principle, unless some bodily evil can produce an evil of the soul, we must not suppose that the soul, which is one thing, can be dissolved by any merely external evil which belongs to another ?

Yes, he said, there is reason in that.

Either, then, let us refute this conclusion, or, while it remains unrefuted, let us never say that fever, or any other disease, or the knife put to the throat, or even the cutting up of the whole body into the minutest pieces, can destroy the soul, until she herself is proved to become more unholy or unrighteous in consequence of these things being done to the body ; but that the soul, or anything else if not destroyed by an internal evil, can be destroyed by an external one, is not to be affirmed by any man.

And surely, he replied, no one will ever prove that the souls of men become more unjust in consequence of death.

But if some one who would rather not admit the immortality of the soul boldly denies this, and says that the dying do really become more evil and unrighteous, then, if the speaker is right, I suppose that injustice, like disease, must be assumed to be fatal to the unjust, and that those who take this disorder lie by the natural inherent power of destruction which evil has, and which kills them sooner or later, but in quite another way from that in which, at present, the wicked receive death at the hands of others as the penalty of their deeds ?

Nay, he said, in that case injustice, if fatal to the unjust, will not be so very terrible to him, for he will be delivered from evil. But I rather suspect the opposite to be the truth, and that injustice which, if it have the power, will murder others, keeps the murderer alive—aye, and well awake too ; so far removed is her dwelling-place from being a house of death.

True, I said ; if the inherent natural vice or evil of the soul is unable to kill or destroy her, hardly will that which is appointed to be the destruction of some other body, destroy a soul or anything else except that of which it was appointed to be the destruction.

Yes, that can hardly be.

But the soul which cannot be destroyed by an evil, whether inherent or external, must exist for ever, and if existing for ever, must be immortal ?

Certainly.

That is the conclusion, I said ; and, if a true conclusion, then the souls must always be the same, for if none be destroyed they will not diminish in number. Neither will they increase, for the increase of the immortal natures must come from something mortal, and all things would thus end in immortality.

Very true.

But this we cannot believe—reason will not allow us—any more than we can believe the soul, in her truest nature, to be full of variety and difference and dissimilarity.

What do you mean ? he said.

The soul, I said, being as is now proven, immortal, must be the fairest of compositions and cannot be compounded of many elements ?

Certainly not.

Her immortality is demonstrated by the previous argument, and there are many other proofs ; but to see her as she really is, not as we now behold her, marred by communion with the body and other miseries, you must contemplate her with the eye of reason, in her original purity ; and then her beauty will be revealed, and justice and injustice and all the things which we have described will be manifested more clearly. Thus far, we have spoken the truth concerning her as she appears at present, but we must remember also that we have seen her only in a condition which may be compared to that of the sea-god Glaucus, whose original image can hardly be discerned because his natural members are broken off and crushed and damaged by the waves in all sorts of ways, and incrustations have grown over them of seaweed and shells and stones, so that he is more like some monster than he is to his own natural form. And the soul which we behold is in a similar condition, disfigured by ten thousand ills. But not there, Glaucón, not there must we look.

Where then ?

At her love of wisdom. Let us see whom she affects, and what society and converse she seeks in virtue of her near kindred with the immortal and eternal and divine ; also how different she would become if wholly following this superior principle, and borne by a divine impulse out of the ocean in which she now is, and disengaged from the stones and shells and things of earth and rock which in wild variety spring up around her because she feeds upon earth, and is overgrown by the good things of this life as they are termed : then you would see her as she is, and know whether she has one shape only or many, or what her nature is. Of her affections and of the forms which she takes in this present life I think that we have now said enough.

True, he replied.

And thus, I said, we have fulfilled the conditions of the argument ; we have not introduced the rewards and glories of justice, which, as you were saying, are to be found in Homer and Hesiod ; but justice in her own nature has been shown to be best for the soul in her own nature. Let a man do what is just, whether he have the ring of Gyges or not, and even if in addition to the ring of Gyges he put on the helmet of Hades.

Very true.

And now, Glaucón, there will be no harm in further enumerating how many and how great are the rewards which justice and the other virtues procure to the soul from gods and men, both in life and after death.

Certainly not, he said.

Will you repay me, then, what you borrowed in the argument ?

What did I borrow ?

The assumption that the just man should appear unjust and the unjust just : for you were of opinion that even if the true state of the case could not possibly escape the eyes of gods and men, still this admission ought to be made for the sake of the argument, in order that pure justice might be weighed against pure injustice. Do you remember ?

I should be much to blame if I had forgotten.



Then, as the cause is decided, I demand on behalf of justice that the estimation in which she is held by gods and men and which we acknowledge to be her due should now be restored to her by us ; since she has shown to confer reality, and not to deceive those who truly possess her, let what has been taken from her be given back, that so she may win that palm of appearance which is hers also, and which she gives to her own.

The demand, he said, is just.

In the first place, I said—and this is the first thing which you will have to give back—the nature both of the just and unjust is truly known to the gods.

Granted.

And if they are both known to them, one must be the friend and the other the enemy of the gods, as we admitted from the beginning ?

True.

And the friend of the gods may be supposed to receive from them all things at their best, excepting only such evil as is the necessary consequence of former sins ?

Certainly.

Then this must be our notion of the just man, that even when he is in poverty or sickness, or any other seeming misfortune, all things will in the end work together for good to him in life and death : for the gods have a care of anyone whose desire is to become just and to be like God, as far as man can attain the divine likeness, by the pursuit of virtue ?

Yes, he said ; if he is like God he will surely not be neglected by him.

And of the unjust may not the opposite be supposed ?

Certainly.

Such, then, are the palms of victory which the gods give the just ?

That is my conviction.

And what do they receive of men ? Look at things as they really are, and you will see that the clever unjust are in the case of runners, who run well from the starting-place to the goal but not back again from the goal : they go off at a great pace, but in the end only look foolish, slinking away with their ears dragging on their shoulders and without a crown ; but the true runner comes to the finish and receives the prize and is crowned. And this is the way with the just ; he who endures to the end of every action and occasion of his entire life has a good report and carries off the prize which men have to bestow.

True.

And now you must allow me to repeat of the just the blessings which you were attributing to the fortunate unjust. I shall say of them, what you were saying of the others, that as they grow older, they become rulers in their own city if they care to be ; they marry whom they like and give in marriage to whom they will ; all that you said of the others I now say of these. And, on the other hand, of the unjust I say that the greater number, even though they escape in their youth, are found out at last and look foolish at the end of their course, and when they come to be old and miserable are flouted alike by

stranger and citizen ; they are beaten and then come those things unfit for ears polite, as you truly term them ; they will be racked and have their eyes burned out, as you were saying. And you may suppose that I have repeated the remainder of your tale of horrors. But will you let me assume, without reciting them, that these things are true ?

Certainly he said, what you say is true

These, then, are the prizes and rewards and gifts which are bestowed upon the just by gods and men in this present life, in addition to the other good things which justice of herself provides

Yes, he said ; and they are fair and lasting.

And yet, I said, all these are as nothing, either in number or greatness in comparison with those other recompenses which await both just and unjust after death. And you ought to hear them, and then both just and unjust will have received from us a full payment of the debt which the argument owes to them

Speak, he said ; there are few things which I would more gladly hear.

Well, I said, I will tell you a tale ; not one of the tales which Odysseus tells to the hero Alcinous, yet this too is a tale of a hero, Er the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by birth. He was slain in battle, and ten days afterwards, when the bodies of the dead were taken up already in a state of corruption, his body was found unaffected by decay, and carried away home to be buried. And on the twelfth day, as he was lying on the funeral pile, he returned to life and told them what he had seen in the other world. He said that when his soul left the body he went on a journey with a great company, and that they came to a mysterious place at which there were two openings in the earth ; they were near together, and over against them were two other openings in the heaven above. In the intermediate space there were judges seated, who commanded the just, after they had given judgement on them and had bound their sentences in front of them, to ascend by the heavenly way on the right hand ; and in like manner the unjust were bidden by them to descend by the lower way on the left hand ; these also bore the symbols of their deeds, but fastened on their backs. He drew near, and they told him that he was to be the messenger who would carry the report of the other world to men, and they bade him hear and see all that was to be heard and seen in that place. Then he beheld and saw on one side the souls departing at either opening of heaven and earth when sentence had been given on them ; and at the two other openings other souls, some ascending out of the earth dusty and worn with travel, some descending out of heaven clean and bright. And arriving ever and anon they seemed to have come from a long journey, and they went forth with gladness into the meadow, where they encamped as at a festival ; and those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously enquiring about the things above, and the souls which came from heaven about the things beneath. And they told one another of what had happened by the way, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey

beneath the earth (now the journey lasted a thousand years), while those from above were describing heavenly delights and visions of inconceivable beauty. The story, Glaucon, would take too long to tell; but the sum was this—he said that for every wrong which they had done to anyone they suffered ten-fold; or once in a hundred years—such being reckoned to be the length of man's life, and the penalty being thus paid ten times in a thousand years. If, for example, there were any who had been the cause of many deaths, or had betrayed or enslaved cities or armies, or been guilty of any other evil behaviour, for each and all of their offences they received punishment ten times over, and the rewards of beneficence and justice and holiness were in the same proportion. I need hardly repeat what he said concerning young children dying almost as soon as they were born. Of piety and impiety to gods and parents, and of murderers, there were retributions other and greater far which he described. He mentioned that he was present when one of the spirits asked another, "Where is Ardiaeus the Great?" (Now this Ardiaeus lived a thousand years before the time of Er—he had been the tyrant of some city of Pamphylia, and had murdered his aged father and his elder brother, and was said to have committed many other abominable crimes) The answer of the other spirit was: "He comes not hither and will never come. And this," said he, "was one of the dreadful sights which we ourselves witnessed. We were at the mouth of the cavern, and, having completed all our experiences, were about to reascend, when of a sudden Ardiaeus appeared and several others, most of whom were tyrants; and there were also besides the tyrants private individuals who had been great criminals: they were just, as they fancied, about to return into the upper world, but the mouth, instead of admitting them, gave a roar, whenever any of these incurable sinners or some one who had not been sufficiently punished tried to ascend; and then wild men of fiery aspect, who were standing by and heard the sound, seized and carried them off; and Ardiaeus and others they bound head and foot and hand, and threw them down and flayed them with scourges, and dragged them along the road at the side, carding them on thorns like wool, and declaring to the passers-by what were their crimes, and that they were being taken away to be cast into hell." And of all the many terrors which they had endured, he said that there was none like the terror which each of them felt at that moment, lest they should hear the voice; and when there was silence, one by one they ascended with exceeding joy. These, said Er, were the penalties and retributions, and there were blessings as great.

Now when the spirits which were in the meadow had tarried seven days, on the eighth they were obliged to proceed on their journey, and, on the fourth day after, he said that they came to a place where they could see from above a line of light, straight as a column, extending right through the whole heaven and through the earth, in colour resembling the rainbow, only brighter and purer; another day's journey brought them to the place, and there, in the midst of the light, they saw the ends of the chains of heaven let down from above: for this light is the belt of heaven, and holds together the circle of the

universe, like the under-girders of a trireme. From these ends is extended the spindle of Necessity, on which all the revolutions turn. The shaft and hook of this spindle are made of steel, and the whorl is made partly of steel and also partly of other materials. Now the whorl is in form like the whorl used on earth; and the description of it implied that there is one large hollow whorl which is quite scooped out, and into this is fitted another lesser one, and another, and another, and four others, making eight in all, like vessels which fit into one another; the whorls show their edges on the upper side, and on their lower side all together form one continuous whorl. This is pierced by the spindle, which is driven home through the centre of the eighth. The first and outermost whorl has the rim broadest, and the seven inner whorls are narrower, in the following proportions—the sixth is next to the first in size, the fourth next to the sixth; then comes the eighth; the seventh is fifth, the fifth is sixth, the third is seventh, last and eighth comes the second. The largest (or fixed stars) is spangled, and the seventh (or sun) is brightest; the eighth (or moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn and Mercury) are in colour like one another, and yellower than the preceding; the third (Venus) has the whitest light; the fourth (Mars) is reddish; the sixth (Jupiter) is in whiteness second. Now the whole spindle has the same motion; but, as the whole revolves in one direction, the seven inner circles move slowly in the other, and of these the swiftest is the eighth; next in swiftness are the seventh, sixth, and fifth, which move together; third in swiftness appeared to move according to the law of this reversed motion the fourth; the third appeared fourth and the second fifth. The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity; and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren, who goes round with them, hymning a single tone or note. The eight together form one harmony; and round about, at equal intervals, there is another band, three in number each sitting upon her throne; these are the Fates, daughters of Necessity, who are clothed in white robes and have chaplets upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens—Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, Atropos of the future; Clotho from time to time assisting with a touch of her right hand the revolution of the outer circle of the whorl or spindle, and Atropos with her left hand touching and guiding the inner ones, and Lachesis laying hold of either in turn, first with one hand and then with the other.

When Er and the spirits arrived, their duty was to go at once to Lachesis; but first of all there came a prophet who arranged them in order; then he took from the knees of Lachesis lots and samples of lives, and having mounted a high pulpit, spoke as follows: "Hear the word of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of life and mortality. Your genius will not be allotted to you, but you will choose your genius; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice, and the life which he chooses shall be his destiny. Virtue is free, and as a man honours or dishonours her he will have more or less of her; the responsibility is with the chooser—God is justified." When the Interpreter had thus spoken he scattered lots indifferently

among them all, and each of them took up the lot which fell near him, all but Er himself (he was not allowed), and each as he took his lot perceived the number which he had obtained. Then the Interpreter placed on the ground before them the samples of lives; and there were many more lives than the souls present, and they were of all sorts. There were lives of every animal and of man in every condition. And there were tyrannies among them, some lasting out the tyrant's life, others which broke off in the middle and came to an end in poverty and exile and beggary; and there were lives of famous men, some who were famous for their form and beauty as well as for their strength and success in games, or, again for their birth and the qualities of their ancestors; and some who were the reverse of famous for the opposite qualities. And of women likewise; there was not, however, any definite character in them, because the soul, when choosing a new life, must of necessity become different. But there was every other quality, and they all mingled with one another, and also with elements of wealth and poverty, and disease and health; and there were mean states also. And here, my dear Glaucon, is the supreme peril of our human state; and therefore the utmost care should be taken. Let each one of us leave every other kind of knowledge and seek and follow one thing only, if peradventure he may be able to learn and discern between good and evil, and so to choose always and everywhere the better life as he has opportunity. He should consider the bearing of all these things which have been mentioned severally and collectively upon virtue; he should know what the effect of beauty is when combined with poverty or wealth in a particular soul, and what are the good and evil consequences of noble and humble birth, of private and public station, of strength and weakness, of cleverness and dullness, and of all the natural and acquired gifts of the soul, and the operation of them when conjoined; he will then look at the nature of the soul, and from the consideration of all these qualities he will be able to determine which is the better and which is the worse; and so he will choose, giving the name of evil to the life which will make his soul more unjust, and good to the life which will make his soul more just; all else he will disregard. For we have seen and know that this is the best choice both in life and after death. A man must take with him into the world below an adamantine faith in truth and right, that there too he may be undazzled by the desire of wealth or the other allurements of evil, lest, coming upon tyrannies and similar villainies he do irremediable wrongs to others and suffer yet worse himself; but let him know how to choose the mean and avoid the extremes on either side, as far as possible, not only in this life but in all that which is to come. For this is the way of happiness.

And according to the report of the messenger from the other world this was what the prophet said at the time: "Even for the last comer, if he chooses wisely and will live diligently, there is appointed a happy and not undesirable existence. Let not him who chooses first be careless, and let not the last despair." And when he had spoken, he who had the first choice came forward and in a moment chose the greatest tyranny; his mind having been darkened by folly and sensuality, he had not thought out the whole matter before he chose,

and did not at first sight perceive that he was fated, among other evils, to devour his own children. But when he had time to reflect, and saw what was in the lot, he began to beat his breast and lament over his choice, forgetting the proclamation of the prophet; for, instead of throwing the blame of his misfortune on himself, he accused chance and the gods, and everything rather than himself. Now he was one of those who came from heaven, and in a former life had dwelt in a well-ordered State, but his virtue was a matter of habit only, and he had no philosophy. And it was true of others who were similarly overtaken, that the greater number of them came from heaven and therefore they had never been schooled by trial, whereas the pilgrims who came from earth having themselves suffered and seen others suffer were not in a hurry to choose. And owing to this inexperience of theirs, and also because the lot was a chance, many of the souls exchanged a good destiny for an evil or an evil for a good. For if a man had always on his arrival in this world dedicated himself from the first to sound philosophy, and had been moderately fortunate in the number of the lot, he might, as the messenger reported, be happy here, and also his journey to another life and return to this, instead of being rough and underground, would be smooth and heavenly. Most curious, he said was the spectacle—sad and laughable and strange; for the choice of the souls was in most cases based on their experience of a previous life. There he saw the soul which had once been Orpheus choosing the life of a swan out of enmity to the race of women, hating to be born of a woman because they had been his murderers; he beheld also the soul of Thamyras choosing the life of a nightingale; birds, on the other hand, like the swan and other musicians, wanting to be men. The soul which obtained the twentieth lot chose the life of a lion, and this was the soul of Ajax the son of Telamon, who would not be a man, remembering the injustice which was done him in the judgement about the arms. The next was Agamemnon, who took the life of an eagle, because, like Ajax, he hated human nature by reason of his sufferings. About the middle came the lot of Atalanta; she seeing the great fame of an athlete, was unable to resist the temptation: and after her there followed the soul of Epeus the son of Panopeus passing into the nature of a woman cunning in the arts; and far away among the last who chose, the soul of the jester Thersites was putting on the form of a monkey. There came also the soul of Odysseus having yet to make a choice, and his lot happened to be the last of them all. Now the recollection of former toils had disenchanted him of ambition, and he went about for a considerable time in search of the life of a private man who had no cares; he had some difficulty in finding this, which was lying about and had been neglected by everybody else; and when he saw it, he said that he would have done the same had his lot been first instead of last, and that he was delighted to have it. And not only did men pass into animals, but I must also mention that there were animals tame and wild who changed into one another and into corresponding human natures—the good into the gentle and the evil into the savage, in all sorts of combinations.

All the souls had now chosen their lives, and they went in the order of their choice to Lachesis, who sent with them the genius whom they had severally chosen, to be the guardian of their lives and the fulfiller of the choice : this genius led the souls first to Clotho, and drew them within the revolution of the spindle impelled by her hand, thus ratifying the destiny of each ; and then, when they were fastened to this, carried them to Atropos, who spun the threads and made them irreversible, whence without turning round they passed beneath the throne of Necessity ; and when they had all passed, they marched on in a scorching heat to the plain of Forgetfulness, which was a barren waste destitute of trees and verdure ; and then towards evening they encamped by the river of Unmindfulness, whose water no vessel can hold ; of this they were all obliged to drink a certain quantity, and those who were not saved by wisdom drank more than was necessary , and each one as he drank forgot all things. Now after they had gone to rest, about the middle of the night there was a thunderstorm and earthquake, and then in an instant they were driven upwards in all manner of ways to their birth, like stars shooting. He himself was hindered from drinking the water. But in what manner or by what means he returned to the body he could not say ; only, in the morning, awaking suddenly, he found himself lying on the pyre.

And thus, Glaucon, the tale has been saved and has not perished, and will save us if we are obedient to the word spoken ; and we shall pass safely over the river of Forgetfulness and our soul will not be defiled. Wherefore my counsel is that we hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil. Thus shall we live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when, like conquerors in the games who go round to gather gifts, we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have been describing

# ARISTOTLE

## *Poetics*

### PART I

## GENERAL AND COMPARATIVE VIEW OF POETRY AND ITS PRINCIPAL SPECIES

### INTRODUCTION

MY DESIGN is to treat of POETRY in general, and of its several species ; to inquire what is the proper effect of each—what construction of a fable, or plan, is essential to a good poem—of what, and how many, parts each species consists ; with whatever else belongs to the same subject ; which I shall consider in the order that most naturally presents itself.

#### I

Epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambics, as also, for the most part, the music of the flute and of the lyre—all these are, in the most general view of them, *imitations* ; differing, however, from each other in three respects, according to the different means, the different objects, or the different manner of their imitation.

#### II

For as men, some through art and some through habit, imitate various objects by means of colour and figure, and others, again, by voice ; so, with respect to the arts above-mentioned, rhythm, words, and melody are the different means by which, either singly or variously combined, they all produce their imitation.

For example : in the imitations of the flute and the lyre, and of any other instruments capable of producing a similar effect—as the syrinx, or pipe—melody and rhythm only are employed. In those of dance, rhythm alone, without melody ; for there are dancers who, by rhythm applied to gesture, express manners, passions, and actions.

The *epopoeia* imitates by words alone, or by verse ; and that verse may either be composed of various metres, or confined, according to the practice hitherto established, to a single species. For we should otherwise have no general name which would comprehend the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues ; or poems in iambic, elegiac, or other metres, in which the epic species of imitation may be conveyed. Custom, indeed,



connecting the poetry or making with the metre, has denominated some elegiac poets, i.e. makers of elegiac verse ; other epic poets, i.e. makers of hexameter verse ; thus distinguishing poets, not according to the nature of their imitation, but according to that of their metre only. For even they who compose treatises of medicine or natural philosophy in verse are denominated poets : yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common except their metre ; the former, therefore, justly merits the name of poet ; while the other should rather be called a physiologist than a poet.

So, also, though any one should choose to convey his imitation in every kind of metre promiscuously, as Chaeremon has done in his *Centaur*, which is a medley of all sorts of verse, it would not immediately follow that, on that account merely, he was entitled to the name of poet. But of this enough.

There are, again, other species of poetry which make use of all the means of imitation : rhythm, melody, and verse. Such are the dithyrambic, that of nomes, tragedy, and comedy ; with this difference, however, that in some of these they are employed altogether, in others, separately. And such are the differences of these arts with respect to the means by which they imitate.

### III

But as the objects of imitation are the actions of men, and these men must of necessity be either good or bad (for on this does character principally depend ; the manners being, in all men, most strongly marked by virtue and vice), it follows that we can only represent men either as better than they actually are, or worse, or exactly as they are : just as, in painting, the pictures of Polygnotus were above the common level of nature ; those of Pauson below it ; those of Dionysius faithful likenesses.

Now it is evident that each of the imitations above-mentioned will admit of these differences, and become a different kind of imitation, as it imitates objects that differ in this respect. This may be the case with dancing ; with the music of the flute and of the lyre ; and also with the poetry which employs words or verse only, without melody or rhythm : thus, Homer has drawn men superior to what they are ; Cleophon, as they are ; Hegemon the Thasian, the inventor of parodies, and Nicochares, the author of the *Deliad*, worse than they are.

So again, with respect to dithyrambics and nomes : in these, too, the imitation may be as different as that of the *Persians* by Timotheus, and the *Cyclops* by Philoxenus.

Tragedy, also, and comedy, are distinguished in the same manner ; the aim of comedy being to exhibit men worse than we find them, that of tragedy, better.

### IV

There remains the third difference—that of the (manner in which each of these objects may be imitated). For the poet, imitating the same object, and by

the same means may do it either in narration—and that, again, either personating other characters, as Homer does, or in his own person throughout, without change—or he may imitate by representing all his characters as real, and employed in the very action itself.

These, then, are the three differences by which, as I said in the beginning, all imitation is distinguished: those of the means, the object, and the manner; so that Sophocles is, in one respect, an imitator of the same kind with Homer, as elevated characters are the objects of both; in another respect, of the same kind with Aristophanes, as both imitate in the way of action; whence, according to some, the application of the term drama (i.e. action) to such poems. Upon this it is that the Dorians ground their claim to the invention both of tragedy and comedy. For comedy is claimed by the Megarians; both by those of Greece, who contend that it took its rise in their popular government, and by those of Sicily, among whom the poet Epicharmus flourished long before Chionides and Magnes: and tragedy, also is claimed by some of the Dorians of Peloponnesus. In support of these claims they argue from the words themselves. They allege that the Doric word for a village is *come*, the Attic, *demos*; and that comedians were so called, not from *comazein*—to revel—but from their strolling about the *comai*, or villages, before they were tolerated in the city. They say, further, that to do, or act, they express by the word *dran*; the Athenians by *prattein*.

And thus much as to the differences of imitation—how many, and what, they are.

## V

Poetry in general seems to have derived its origin from two causes, each of them natural.

To *imitate* is instinctive in man from his infancy. By this he is distinguished from other animals, that he is, of all, the most imitative, and through this instinct receives his earliest education. All men, likewise, naturally receive pleasure from imitation. This is evident from what we experience in viewing the works of imitative art; for in them we contemplate with pleasure, and with the more pleasure the more exactly they are imitated, such objects as, if real, we could not see without pain; as the figures of the meanest and most disgusting animals, dead bodies, and the like. And the reason of this is, that to learn is a natural pleasure, not confined to philosophers, but common to all men; with this difference only, that the multitude partake of it in a more transient and compendious manner. Hence the pleasure they receive from a picture: in viewing it they learn, they infer, they discover what every object is; that this, for instance, is such a particular man, etc. For if we suppose the object represented to be something which the spectator had never seen, his pleasure, in that case, will not arise from the imitation, but from the workmanship, the colours, or some such cause.

Imitation, then, being thus natural to us, and, secondly, melody and rhythm being also natural (for as to metre, it is plainly a species of rhythm), those

persons in whom originally these propensities were the strongest, were naturally led to rude and extemporaneous attempts, which, gradually improved, gave birth to Poetry.

## VI

But this Poetry, following the different characters of its authors, naturally divided itself into two different kinds. They who were of a grave and lofty spirit chose for their imitation the actions and the adventures of elevated characters ; while poets of a lighter turn represented those of the vicious and contemptible. And these composed originally satires, as the former did hymns and encomia.

Of the lighter kind, we have no poem anterior to the time of Homer, though many such in all probability there were ; but from his time we have ; as his *Margites*, and others of the same species, in which the iambic was introduced as the most proper measure ; and hence, indeed, the name of iambic, because it was the measure in which they used to *iambize* (i.e. to satirize) each other.

And thus these old poets were divided into two classes : those who used the heroic, and those who used the iambic verse

And as, in the serious kind, Homer alone may be said to deserve the name of poet, not only on account of his other excellences, but also of the dramatic spirit of his imitations ; so was he likewise the first who suggested the idea of comedy, by substituting ridicule for invective, and giving that ridicule a dramatic cast ; for his *Margites* bears the same analogy to comedy, as his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to tragedy. But when tragedy and comedy had once made their appearance, succeeding poets, according to the turn of their genius, attached themselves to the one or the other of these new species : the lighter sort, instead of iambic, became comic poets ; the graver, tragic, instead of heroic : and that on account of the superior dignity and higher estimation of these latter forms of poetry.

Whether tragedy has now, with respect to its constituent parts, received the utmost improvement of which it is capable, considered both in itself and relatively to the theatre, is a question that belongs not to this place.

## VII

Both tragedy, then, and comedy, having originated in a rude and unpremeditated manner—the first from the dithyrambic hymns, the other from those phallic songs which in many cities remain still in use—each advanced gradually towards perfection by such successive improvements as were most obvious.

TRAGEDY, after various changes, reposed at length in the completion of its proper form. Aeschylus first added a second actor ; he also abridged the chorus, and made the dialogue the principal part of tragedy. Sophocles

increased the number of actors to three, and added the decoration of painted scenery. It was also late before tragedy threw aside the short and simple fable and ludicrous language of its satyric original, and attained its proper magnitude and dignity. The iambic measure was then first adopted: for originally the trochaic tetrameter was made use of as better suited to the satyric and saltatorial genius of the poem at that time; but when the dialogue was formed, nature itself pointed out the proper metre. For the iambic is, of all metres, the most colloquial; as appears evidently from this fact, that our common conversation frequently falls into iambic verse; seldom into hexameter. and only when we depart from the usual melody of speech. Episodes also, were multiplied, and every other part of the drama successively improved and polished.

But of this enough; to enter into a minute detail would, perhaps, be a task of some length.

## VIII

COMEDY, as was said before, is an imitation of bad characters; bad, not with respect to every sort of vice, but to the ridiculous only, as being a species of turpitude or deformity; since it may be defined to be a fault or deformity of such a sort as is neither painful nor destructive. A ridiculous face, for example, is something ugly and distorted, but not so as to cause pain.

The successive improvements of tragedy, and the respective authors of them, have not escaped our knowledge; but those of comedy, from the little attention that was paid to it in its origin, remain in obscurity. For it was not till late that comedy was authorized by the magistrate and carried on at the public expense; it was at first a private and voluntary exhibition. From the time, indeed, when it began to acquire some degree of form, its poets have been recorded; but who first introduced masks, or prologues, or augmented the number of actors—these, and other particulars of the same kind, are unknown.

Epicharmus and Phormis were the first who invented comic fables. This improvement, therefore, is of Sicilian origin. But, of Athenian poets, Crates was the first who abandoned the iambic form of comedy, and made use of invented and general stories or fables.

## IX

Epic poetry agrees so far with tragedies as it is an imitation of great characters and actions by means of words; but in this it differs, that it makes use of only one kind of metre throughout, and that it is narrative. It also differs in length, for tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine its action within the limits of a single revolution of the sun, or nearly so; but the time of epic action is indefinite. This, however, at first was equally the case with tragedy itself.

Of their constituent parts some are common to both, some peculiar to tragedy. He, therefore, who is a judge of the beauties and defects of tragedy is, of course, equally a judge with respect to those of epic poetry ; for all the parts of the epic poem are to be found in tragedy ; not all those of tragedy in the epic poem.

## PART II

### OF TRAGEDY

#### I

OF THE species of poetry which imitates in hexameters, and of comedy, we shall speak hereafter. Let us now consider TRAGEDY ; collecting first, from what has been already said, its true and essential definition

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of some action that is important, entire, and of a proper magnitude—by language, embellished and rendered pleasurable, but by different means in different parts—in the way, not of narration, but of action—effecting through pity and terror the correction and refinement of such passions.

By pleasurable language I mean a language that has the embellishments of rhythm, melody, and metre. And I add, by different means in different parts, because in some parts metre alone is employed, in others, melody.

#### II

Now as tragedy imitates by acting, the decoration, in the first place, must necessarily be one of its parts : then the *melopoeia* (or music) and the diction ; for these last include the means of tragic imitation. By diction I mean the metrical composition. The meaning of *melopoeia* is obvious to everyone.

Again, tragedy being an imitation of an action, and the persons employed in that action being necessarily characterized by their manners and their sentiments, since it is from these that actions themselves derive their character, it follows that there must also be manners and sentiments as the two causes of actions, and, consequently, of the happiness or unhappiness of all men. The imitation of the action is the fable : for by fable I now mean the contexture of incidents, or the plot. By manners, I mean whatever marks the characters of the persons ; by sentiments, whatever they say, whether proving anything, or delivering a general sentiment, etc.

Hence all tragedy must necessarily contain six parts, which together constitute its peculiar character or quality : fable, manners, diction, sentiments, decoration and music. Of these parts, two relate to the means, one to the manner, and three to the object of imitation. And these are all. These specific parts, if we may so call them, have been employed by most poets, and are all to be found in almost every tragedy.

## III

But of all these parts the most important is the combination of incidents or the fable. Because tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of actions—of life, of happiness and unhappiness; for happiness consists in action, and the supreme good itself, the very end of life, is action of a certain kind—not quality. Now the manners of men constitute only their quality or characters; but it is by their actions that they are happy, or the contrary. Tragedy, therefore, does not imitate action for the sake of imitating manners, but in the imitation of action that of manners is of course involved. So that the action and the fable are the end of tragedy; and in everything the end is of principal importance.

Again, tragedy cannot subsist without action; without manners it may. The tragedies of most modern poets have this defect; a defect common, indeed, among poets in general. As among painters also, this is the case with Zeuxis, compared with Polygnotus: the latter excels in the expression of the manners; there is no such expression in the pictures of Zeuxis.

Further, suppose any one to string together a number of speeches in which the manners are strongly marked, the language and the sentiments well turned; this will not be sufficient to produce the proper effect of tragedy: that end will much rather be answered by a piece, defective in each of those particulars, but furnished with a proper fable and contexture of incidents. Just as in painting, the most brilliant colours, spread at random and without design, will give far less pleasure than the simplest outline of a figure.

Add to this, that those parts of tragedy by means of which it becomes most interesting and affecting are parts of the fable; I mean revolutions and discoveries.

As a further proof, adventurers in tragic writing are sooner able to arrive at excellence in the language and the manners than in the construction of a plot; as appears from almost all our earlier poets.

The fable, then, is the principal part—the soul, as it were—of tragedy, and the manners are next in rank; tragedy being an imitation of an action, and through that principally of the agents.

In the third place stand the sentiments. To this part it belongs to say such things as are true and proper; which, in the dialogue, depends on the political and rhetorical arts: for the ancients made their characters speak in the style of political and popular eloquence; but now the rhetorical manner prevails.

The manners are whatever manifests the disposition of the speaker. There are speeches, therefore, which are without manners or character, as not containing anything by which the propensities or aversions of the person who delivers them can be known. The sentiments comprehend whatever is said, whether proving anything affirmatively or negatively, or expressing some general reflection, etc.

Fourth in order is the diction; that is, as I have already said, the expression of the sentiments by words; the power and effect of which is the same, whether in verse or prose.

Of the remaining two parts the music stands next ; of all the pleasurable accompaniments and embellishments of tragedy the most delightful.

The decoration has also a great effect, but of all the parts is most foreign to the art. For the power of tragedy is felt without representation and actors ; and the beauty of the decorations depends more on the art of the mechanic than on that of the poet.

#### IV

These things being thus adjusted, let us go on to examine in what manner the fable should be constructed ; since this is the most important part of tragedy.

Now we have defined tragedy to be an imitation of an action that is complete and entire ; and that has also a certain magnitude ; for a thing may be entire and whole, and yet not be of any magnitude

(1) By entire I mean that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not necessarily suppose anything before it, but which requires something to follow it. An end, on the contrary, is that which supposes something to precede it, either necessarily or probably, but which nothing is required to follow. A middle is that which both supposes something to precede and requires something to follow. The poet, therefore, who would construct his fable properly is not at liberty to begin or end where he pleases, but must conform to these definitions.

(2) Again, whatever is beautiful, whether it be an animal, or any other thing composed of different parts, must not only have those parts arranged in a certain manner, but must also be of a certain magnitude ; for beauty consists in magnitude and order. Hence it is that no very minute animal can be beautiful ; the eye comprehends the whole too instantaneously to distinguish and compare the parts. Neither, on the contrary, can one of a prodigious size be beautiful ; because, as all its parts cannot be seen at once, the whole, the unity of object, is lost to the spectator, as it would be, for example, if he were surveying an animal of many miles in length. As, therefore, in animals and other objects, a certain magnitude is requisite, but that magnitude must be such as to present a whole easily comprehended by the eye ; so in the fable a certain length is requisite, but that length must be such as to present a whole easily comprehended by the memory.

With respect to the measure of this length—if referred to actual representation in the dramatic contests, it is a matter foreign to the art itself. For if a hundred tragedies were to be exhibited in concurrence, the length of each performance must be regulated by the hour-glass ; a practice of which, it is said, there have formerly been instances. But if we determine this measure by the nature of the thing itself, the more extensive the fable, consistently with the clear and easy comprehension of the whole, the more beautiful will it be, with respect to magnitude. In general, we may say that an action is sufficiently extended when it is long enough to admit of a change of fortune, from happy

to unhappy, or the reverse, brought about by a succession, necessary or probable, of well-connected incidents.

## V

A fable is not one, as some conceive it to be, merely because the hero of it is one. For numberless events happen to one man, many of which are such as cannot be connected into one event; and so, likewise, there are many actions of one man which cannot be connected into any one action. Hence appears the mistake of all those poets who have composed *Herculeids*, *Theseids*, and other poems of that kind. They conclude that because Hercules was one, so also must be the fable of which he is the subject. But Homer, among his many other excellences, seems also to have been perfectly aware of this mistake, either from art or genius. For when he composed his *Odyssey*, he did not introduce all the events of his hero's life—such, for instance, as the wound he received upon Parnassus; his feigned madness when the Grecian army was assembling, etc—events not connected, either by necessary or probable consequence, with each other; but he comprehended those only which have relation to one action; for such we call that of the *Odyssey*. And in the same manner he composed his *Iliad*.

As, therefore, in other mimetic arts, one imitation is an imitation of one thing, so here the fable, being an imitation of an action, should be an imitation of an action that is one and entire, the parts of it being so connected that if anyone of them be either transposed or taken away the whole will be destroyed or changed; for whatever may be either retained or omitted, without making any sensible difference, is not properly a part.

## VI

It appears, further, from what has been said, that it is not the poet's province to relate such things as have actually happened, but such as might have happened—such as are possible, according either to probable or necessary consequence.

For it is not by writing in verse or prose that the historian and the poet are distinguished: the work of Herodotus might be versified, but it would still be a species of history, no less with metre than without. They are distinguished by this, that the one relates what has been, the other what might be. On this account poetry is a more philosophical and a more excellent thing than history: for poetry is chiefly conversant about general truth, history about particular. In what manner, for example, any person of a certain character would speak or act, probably or necessarily—this is general; and this is the object of poetry, even while it makes use of particular names. But what Alcibiades did, or what happened to him—this is particular truth.

With respect to comedy this is now become obvious; for here the poet, when he has formed his plot of probable incidents, gives to his characters



whatever names he pleases ; and is not, like the iambic poets, particular and personal.

Tragedy, indeed, retains the use of real names ; and the reason is that what we are disposed to believe, we must think possible. Now, what has never actually happened we are not apt to regard as possible ; but what has been is unquestionably so, or it could not have been at all. There are, however, some tragedies in which one or two of the names are historical, and the rest feigned : there are even some in which none of the names are historical ; such is Agathon's tragedy called *The Flower* ; for in that all is invention, both incidents and names ; and yet it pleases. It is by no means, therefore, essential that a poet should confine himself to the known and established subjects of tragedy. Such a restraint would, indeed, be ridiculous ; since even those subjects that are known are known comparatively but to few, and yet are interesting to all.

From all this it is manifest that a poet should be a poet or maker of fables, rather than of verses ; since it is imitation that constitutes the poet, and of this imitation actions are the object : nor is he the less a poet, though the incidents of his fable should chance to be such as have actually happened ; for nothing hinders, but that some true events may possess that probability, the invention of which entitles him to the name of poet

## VII

Of simple fables or actions, the episodic are the worst I call that an episodic fable, the episodes of which follow each other without any probable or necessary connection ; a fault into which bad poets are betrayed by their want of skill, and good poets by the players : for in order to accommodate their pieces to the purposes of rival performers in the dramatic contests, they spin out the action beyond their powers, and are thus frequently forced to break the connection and continuity of its parts.

But tragedy is an imitation, not only of a complete action, but also of an action exciting terror and pity. Now that purpose is best answered by such events as are not only unexpected, but unexpected consequences of each other : for, by this means, they will have more of the wonderful than if they appeared to be the effects of chance ; since we find that, among events merely casual, those are the most wonderful and striking which seem to imply design : as when, for instance, the statue of Mityls at Argos killed the very man who had murdered Mityls, by falling down upon him as he was surveying it ; events of this kind not having the appearance of accident. It follows, then, that such fables as are formed on these principles must be the best.

## VIII

Fables are of two sorts, simple and complicated ; for so also are the actions themselves of which they are imitations. An action (having the continuity and

unity prescribed) I call simple, when its catastrophe is produced without either revolution or discovery; complicated when with one or both. And these should arise from the structure of the fable itself, so as to be the natural consequences, necessary or probable, of what has preceded in the action. For there is a wide difference between incidents that follow from, and incidents that follow only after, each other.

## IX

A revolution is a change (such as has already been mentioned) into the reverse of what is expected from the circumstances of the action; and that produced, as we have said, by probable or necessary consequence. Thus, in the *Oedipus*, the messenger, meaning to make Oedipus happy, and to relieve him from the dread he was under with respect to his mother, by making known to him his real birth, produces an effect directly contrary to his intention. Thus also in the tragedy of *Lynceus*, Lynceus is led to suffer death, Danaus follows to inflict it; but the event, resulting from the course of the incidents, is that Danaus is killed and Lynceus saved.

A discovery—as, indeed, the word implies—is a change from unknown to known, happening between those characters whose happiness or unhappiness forms the catastrophe of the drama, and terminating in friendship or enmity.

The best sort of discovery is that which is accompanied by a revolution as in the *Oedipus*.

There are also other discoveries; for inanimate things of any kind may be recognized in the same manner, and we may discover whether such a particular thing was, or was not, done by such a person. But the discovery most appropriated to the fable and the action is that above defined; because such discoveries and revolutions must excite either pity or terror, and tragedy we have defined to be an imitation of pitiable and terrible actions: and because, also, by them the event, happy or unhappy, is produced.

Now discoveries, being relative things, are sometimes of one of the persons only, the other being already known; and sometimes they are reciprocal: thus, Iphigenia is discovered to Orestes by the letter which she charges him to deliver, and Orestes is obliged, by other means, to make himself known to her.

These, then, are two parts of the fable—revolution and discovery. There is a third, which we denominate disasters. The two former have been explained. Disasters comprehend all painful or destructive actions: the exhibition of death, bodily anguish, wounds, and everything of that kind.

## X

The parts of tragedy which are necessary to constitute its quality have been already enumerated. Its parts of quantity—the distinct parts into which it is divided—are these: prologue, episode, exode, and chorus; which last is also divided into the parade and the stasimon. These are common to all tragedies. The *commoi* are found in some only.

The prologue is all that part of a tragedy which precedes the parade of the chorus ; the episode, all that part which is included between entire choral odes ; the exode, that part which has no choral ode after it.

Of the choral part, the parade is the first speech of the whole chorus ; the *stasimon* includes all those choral odes that are without anapaests and trochee.

The *commos* is a general lamentation of the chorus and the actors together.

Such are the separate parts into which tragedy is divided. Its parts of quality were before explained.

The order of the subject leads us to consider, in the next place, what the poet should aim at and what to avoid in the construction of his fable ; and by what means the purpose of tragedy may be best effected.

Now since it is requisite to the perfection of a tragedy that its plot should be of the complicated, not of the simple kind, and that it should imitate such actions as excite terror and pity (this being the peculiar property of the tragic imitation), it follows evidently, in the first place, that the change from prosperity to adversity should not be represented as happening to a virtuous character ; for this raises disgust rather than terror or compassion. Neither should the contrary change, from adversity to prosperity, be exhibited in a vicious character : this, of all plans, is the most opposite to the genius of tragedy, having no one property that it ought to have ; for it is neither gratifying in a moral view, nor affecting, nor terrible. Nor, again, should the fall of a very bad man from prosperous to adverse fortune be represented : because, though such a subject may be pleasing from its moral tendency, it will produce neither pity nor terror. For our pity is excited by misfortunes undeservedly suffered, and our terror by some resemblance between the sufferer and ourselves. Neither of these effects will, therefore, be produced by such an event

There remains, then, for our choice, the character between these extremes : that of a person neither eminently virtuous or just, nor yet involved in misfortune by deliberate vice or villainy, but by some error of human frailty ; and this person should also be someone of high fame and flourishing prosperity. For example, Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families

## XII

Hence it appears that, to be well constructed, a fable, contrary to the opinion of some, should be single rather than double ; that the change of fortune should not be from adverse to prosperous, but the reverse ; and that it should be the consequence, not of vice, but of some great frailty, in a character such as has been described, or better rather than worse.

These principles are confirmed by experience ; for poets formerly admitted almost any story into the number of tragic subjects ; but now, the subjects of the best tragedies are confined to a few families—to Alcmæon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and others, the sufferers or the authors of some terrible calamity.

The most perfect tragedy, then, according to the principles of the art, is of this construction. Whence appears the mistake of those critics who censure Euripides for this practice in his tragedies, many of which terminate unhappily; for this, as we have shown, is right. And as the strongest proof of it we find that upon the stage, and in the dramatic contests, such tragedies, if they succeed, have always the most tragic effect; and Euripides, though in other respects faulty in the conduct of his subjects, seems clearly to be the most tragic of all poets.

I place in the second rank that kind of fable to which some assign the first: that which is of a double construction like the *Odyssey*, and also ends in two opposite events, to the good and to the bad characters. That this passes for the best is owing to the weakness of the spectators, to whose wishes the poets accommodate their productions. This kind of pleasure, however, is not the proper pleasure of tragedy, but belongs rather to comedy; for there, if even the bitterest enemies, like Orestes and Aegisthus, are introduced, they quit the scene at last in perfect friendship, and no blood is shed on either side.

### XIII

Terror and pity may be raised by the decoration—the mere spectacle; but they may also arise from the circumstances of the action itself; which is far preferable and shows a superior poet. For the fable should be so constructed that, without the assistance of the sight, its incidents may excite horror and commiseration in those who hear them only: an effect which every one who hears the fable of the *Oedipus* must experience. But to produce this effect by means of the decoration discovers want of art in the poet; who must also be supplied by the public with an expensive apparatus.

As to those poets who make use of the decoration in order to produce, not the terrible, but the marvellous only, their purpose has nothing in common with that of tragedy. For we are not to seek for every sort of pleasure from tragedy, but for that only which is proper to the species.

Since, therefore, it is the business of the tragic poet to give that pleasure which arises from pity and terror, through imitation, it is evident that he ought to produce that effect by the circumstances of the action itself.

### XIV

Let us, then, see of what kind those incidents are which appear most terrible or piteous.

Now such actions, must of necessity, happen between persons who are either friends, or enemies, or indifferent to each other. If an enemy kills, or purposes to kill, an enemy, in neither case is any commiseration raised in us, beyond what necessarily arises from the nature of the action itself.

The case is the same when the persons are neither friends nor enemies. But when such disasters happen between friends—when, for instance, the brother

kills, or is going to kill, his brother, the son his father, the mother her son, or the reverse—these, and others of a similar kind, are the proper incidents for the poet's choice. The received tragic subjects, therefore, he is not at liberty essentially to alter; Clytemnestra must die by the hand of Orestes, and Eriphyle by that of Alcmaeon; but it is his province to invent other subjects, and to make a skilful use of those which he finds already established. What I mean by a skilful use I proceed to explain.

The atrocious action may be perpetrated knowingly and intentionally, as was usual with the earlier poets, and as Euripides, also, has represented Medea destroying her children

It may, likewise, be perpetrated by those who are ignorant at the time of the connection between them and the injured person, which they afterwards discover; like Oedipus, in Sophocles. There, indeed, the action itself does not make a part of the drama: the Alcmaeon of Astydamos, and Telegonus in the *Ulysses Wounded*, furnish instances within the tragedy.

There is yet a third way, where a person upon the point of perpetrating, through ignorance, some dreadful deed, is prevented by a sudden discovery.

Beside these, there is no other proper way. For the action must of necessity be either done or not done, and that either with knowledge or without: but of all these ways, that of being ready to execute knowingly, and yet not executing, is the worst; for this is, at the same time, shocking and yet not tragic, because it exhibits no disastrous event. It is, therefore, never, or very rarely, made use of. The attempt of Haemon to kill Creon in the *Antigone* is an example.

Next to this is the actual execution of the purpose.

To execute through ignorance, and afterwards to discover, is better: for the shocking atrociousness is avoided, and, at the same time, the discovery is striking.

But the best of all these ways is the last. Thus, in the tragedy of *Cresphontes*, Merope, in the very act of putting her son to death, discovers him, and is prevented. In the *Iphigenia*, the sister in the same manner discovers her brother; and in the *Helle*, the son discovers his mother at the instant when he was going to betray her.

On this account it is that the subjects of tragedy, as before remarked, are confined to a small number of families. For it was not to art, but to fortune, that poets applied themselves to find incidents of this nature. Hence the necessity of having recourse to those families in which such calamities have happened.

Of the plot or fable and its requisites enough has now been said.

## XV

With respect to the manners, four things are to be attended to by the poet.

First, and principally, they should be good. Now manners, or character, belong, as we have said before, to any speech or action that manifests a certain

disposition ; and they are bad or good as the disposition manifested is bad or good. This goodness of manners may be found in persons of every description : the manners of a woman or of a slave may be good ; though, in general, women are, perhaps, rather bad than good, and slaves altogether bad.

The second requisite of the manners is propriety. There is a manly character of bravery and fierceness which cannot, with propriety, be given to a woman.

The third requisite is resemblance ; for this is a different thing from their being good and proper, as above described.

The fourth is uniformity ; for even though the model of the poet's imitation be some person of ununiform manners, still that person must be represented as uniformly ununiform.

We have an example of manners unnecessarily bad in the character of Menelaus in the tragedy of *Orestes* : of improper and unbecoming manners in the lamentation of Ulysses in *Scylla*, and in the speech of Menalippe : of ununiform manners in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* ; for there the Iphigenia who supplicates for life has no resemblance to the Iphigenia of the conclusion

In the manners, as in the fable, the poet should always aim either at what is necessary or what is probable ; so that such a character shall appear to speak or act, necessarily or probably, in such a manner, and this event to be the necessary or probable consequent of that. Hence it is evident that the development also of a fable should arise out of the fable itself, and not depend upon machinery as in the *Medea*, or in the incidents relative to the return of the Greeks in the *Iliad*. The proper application of machinery is to such circumstances as are extraneous to the drama ; such as either happened before the time of the action, and could not by human means be known ; or are to happen after, and require to be 'foretold : for to the gods we attribute the knowledge of all things. But nothing improbable should be admitted in the incidents of the fable ; or, if it cannot be avoided, it should, at least, be confined to such as are without the tragedy itself ; as in the *Oedipus* of Sophocles.

Since tragedy is an imitation of what is best, we should follow the example of skilful portrait-painters ; who, while they express the peculiar lineaments, and produce a likeness, at the same time improve upon the original. And thus, too, the poet, when he imitates the manners of passionate men (or of indolent, or any other similar kind), should draw an example of approaching rather to a good than to a hard and ferocious character : as Achilles is drawn by Agathon and by Homer. These things the poet should keep in view ; and besides these, whatever relates to those senses which have a necessary connection with poetry : for here, also, he may often err. But of this enough has been said in the treatises already published.

## XVI

What is meant by a discovery has already been explained. Its kinds are the following :

First, the most inartificial of all, and to which, from poverty of invention, the generality of poets have recourse—the discovery by visible signs. Of these signs, some are natural; as the lance with which the family of earth-born Thebans were marked, or the stars which Carcinus has made use of in his *Thyestes*: others are adventitious; and of these some are corporal, as scars; some external, as necklaces, bracelets, etc., or the little boat by which the discovery is made in the tragedy of *Tyro*. Even these, however, may be employed with more or less skill. The discovery of Ulysses, for example, to his nurse by means of his scar, is very different from his discovery by the same means to the herdsmen. For all those discoveries, in which the sign is produced by way of proof, are inartificial. Those which, like that in the “Washing of Ulysses,” happen suddenly and casually are better.

Secondly, discoveries invented at pleasure by the poet, and on that account still inartificial. For example, in the *Iphigenia*, Orestes, after having discovered his sister, discovers himself to her. She, indeed, is discovered by the latter; but Orestes by verbal proofs, and these are such as the poet chooses to make him produce, not such as arise from the circumstances of the fable. This kind of discovery, therefore, borders upon the fault of that first mentioned; for some of the things from which those proofs are drawn are even such as might have been actually produced as visible signs.

Another instance is the discovery by the sound of the shuttle in the *Tereus* of Sophocles

Thirdly, the discovery occasioned by memory; as when some recollection is excited by the view of a particular object. Thus, in the *Cyprians* of Dicaeogenes, a discovery is produced by tears shed at the sight of a picture: and thus, in the “Tale of Alcinous,” Ulysses, listening to the bard, recollects, weeps, and is discovered.

Fourthly, the discovery occasioned by reasoning or inference, such as that in the *Choephorae*: “The person who is arrived resembles me—no one resembles me but Orestes—it might be he!” And that of Polyides the Sophist, in his *Iphigenia*; for the conclusion of Orestes was natural: “It had been his sister’s lot to be sacrificed, and it was now his own!” That also, in the *Tydeus* of Theodectes: “He came to find his son and he himself must perish!” And thus, the daughters of Phineus, in the tragedy denominated from them, viewing the place to which they were led, infer their fate: “there they were to die, for there they were exposed!” There is also a compound sort of discovery arising from false inference in the audience; as in *Ulysses the False Messenger*: he asserts that he shall know the bow which he had not seen; the audience falsely infer that a discovery by that means will follow.

But of all discoveries the best is that which arises from the action itself, and in which a striking effect is produced by probable incidents. Such is that in the *Oedipus* of Sophocles: and that in the *Iphigenia*; for nothing more natural than her desire of conveying the letter. Such discoveries are the best, because they alone are effected without the help of invented proofs or bracelets, etc.

Next to these are the discoveries by inference.

## XVII

The poet, both when he plans and when he writes his tragedy, should put himself as much as possible in the place of a spectator ; for by this means, seeing everything distinctly as if present at the action, he will discern what is proper, and no inconsistencies will escape him. The fault objected to Carcinus is a proof of this. Amphiarus had left the temple: this the poet, for want of conceiving the action to pass before his eyes, overlooked; but in the representation the audience were disgusted, and the piece condemned.

In composing, the poet, should even, as much as possible, be an actor: for, by natural sympathy, they are most persuasive and affecting who are under the influence of actual passion. We share the agitation of those who appear to be truly agitated—the anger of those who appear to be truly angry.

Hence it is that poetry demands either great natural quickness of parts, or an enthusiasm allied to madness. By the first of these we mould ourselves with facility to the imitation of every form ; by the other transported out of ourselves, we become what we imagine.

When the poet invents a subject, he should first draw a general sketch of it, and afterwards give it the detail of its episodes and extend it. The general argument, for instance, of the *Iphigenia* should be considered in this way: "A virgin on the point of being sacrificed is imperceptibly conveyed away from the altar, and transported to another country where it was the custom to sacrifice all strangers to Diana. Of these rites she is appointed priestess. It happens, some time after, that her brother arrives there." But why?—because an oracle had commanded him, for some reason exterior to the general plan. For what purpose? This also is exterior to the plan. "He arrives, is seized, and at the instant that he is going to be sacrificed the discovery is made." And this may be, either in the way of Euripides or, like that of Polyides, by the natural reflection of Orestes that "it was his fate also as it had been his sister's to be sacrificed"; by which exclamation he is saved.

After this, the poet, when he has given names to his characters, should proceed to the episodes of his action ; and he must take care that these belong properly to the subject ; like that of the madness of Orestes, which occasions his being taken, and his escape by means of the ablution. In dramatic poetry the episodes are short ; but in the epic they are the means of drawing out the poem to its proper length. The general story of the *Odyssey*, for example, lies in a small compass: "A certain man is supposed to be absent from his own country for many years ; he is persecuted by Neptune, deprived of all his companions, and left alone. At home his affairs are in disorder—the suitors of his wife dissipating his wealth and plotting the destruction of his son. Tossed by many tempests, he at length arrives, and making himself known to some of his family attacks his enemies, destroys them, and remains himself in safety." This is essential ; the rest is episode.



## XVIII

Every tragedy consists of two parts—the complication and the development. The complication is often formed by incidents supposed prior to the action, and by a part, also, of those that are within the action; the rest form the development. I call complication all that is between the beginning of the piece and the last part, where the change of fortune commences; development all between the beginning of that change and the conclusion. Thus, in the *Lynceus* of Theodectes, the events antecedent to the action and the seizure of the child constitute the complication; the development is from the accusation of murder to the end.

## XIX

There are four kinds of tragedy, deducible from so many parts, which have been mentioned. One kind is the complicated, where all depends on revolution and discovery; another is the disastrous, such as those on the subject of Ajax or Ixion; another, the moral, as the *Phthiotides* and the *Peleus*; and fourthly, the simple, such as the *Phorcides*, the *Prometheus*, and all those tragedies the seance of which is laid in the infernal regions.

It should be the poet's aim to make himself master of all these manners; or as many of them, at least, as possible, and those the best: especially considering the captious criticism to which in these days he is exposed. For the public, having now seen different poets excel in each of these different kinds, expect every single poet to unite in himself, and to surpass, the peculiar excellences of them all.

One tragedy may justly be considered as the same with another or different, not according as the subjects, but rather according as the complication and development are the same or different. Many poets, when they have complicated well, develop badly. They should endeavour to deserve equal applause in both.

## XX

We must also be attentive to what has been often mentioned, and not construct a tragedy upon an epic plan. By an epic plan I mean a fable composed of many fables; as if anyone, for instance, should take the entire fable of the *Iliad* for the subject of tragedy. In the epic poem, the length of the whole admits of a proper magnitude in the parts; but in the drama the effect of such a plan is far different from what is expected. As a proof of this, those poets who have formed the whole of the destruction of Troy into a tragedy, instead of confining themselves (as Euripides, but not Aeschylus, has done in the story of Niobe) to a part, have either been condemned in the representation or have contended without success. Even Agathon has failed on this account and on this only; for in revolutions, and in actions also of the simple

kind, these poets succeed wonderfully in what they aim at ; and that is the union of tragic effect with moral tendency ; as when, for example, a character of great wisdom, but without integrity, is deceived, like Sisyphus ; or a brave but unjust man conquered. Such events, as Agathon says, are probable, " as it is probable, in general, that many things should happen contrary to probability."

## XXI

The chorus should be considered as one of the persons in the drama ; should be a part of the whole, and a sharer in the action : not as in Euripides, but as in Sophocles. As for other poets, their choral songs have no more connection with their subject than with that of any other tragedy ; and hence they are now become detached pieces inserted at leisure—a practice first introduced by Agathon. Yet where is the difference between this arbitrary insertion of an ode and the transposition of a speech, or even of a whole episode, from one tragedy to another ?

## XXII

Of the other parts of tragedy enough has now been said. We are next to consider the diction and the sentiments

For what concerns the sentiments we refer to the principles laid down in the books on rhetoric ; for to that subject they more properly belong. The sentiments include whatever is the object of speech ; as, for instance, to prove, to confute, to move the passions—pity, terror, anger and the like ; to amplify or to diminish. But it is evident that, with respect to the things themselves also, when the poet would make them appear pitiable, or terrible, or great, or probable, he must draw from the same sources ; with this difference only, that in the drama these things must appear to be such, without being shown to be such ; whereas in oratory they must be made to appear so by the speaker, and in consequence of what he says : otherwise what need of an orator if they already appear so in themselves, and not through his eloquence ?

## XXIII

With respect to diction, one part of its theory is that which treats of the figures of speech, such as commanding, entreating, relating, menacing, interrogating, answering, and the like. But this belongs, properly, to the art of acting, and to the professed masters of that kind. The poet's knowledge, or ignorance, of these things cannot any way materially affect the credit of his art. For who will suppose there is any justice in the cavil of Protagoras—that in the words, " The wrath, O goddess, sing," the poet, where he intended a prayer, had expressed a command ? For he insists that to say " Do this " or " Do it not " is to command. This subject, therefore, we pass over as belonging to an art distinct from that of poetry.

## XXIV

To all diction belong the following parts: the letter, the syllable, the conjunction, the noun, the verb, the article, the case, the discourse or speech.

(1) A letter is an indivisible sound; yet not all such sounds are letters, but those only that are capable of forming an intelligible sound. For there are indivisible sounds of brute creatures; but no such sounds are called letters. Letters are of three kinds: vowels, semi-vowels, and mutes. The vowel is that which has a distinct sound without articulation, as *a* or *o*. The semi-vowel, that which has a distinct sound with articulation, as *s* and *r*. The mute, that which, with articulation, has yet no sound by itself; but jointed with one of those letters that have some sound, becomes audible, as *g* and *d*. These all differ from each other, as they are produced by different configurations, and in different parts, of the mouth; as they are aspirated or smooth, long or short; as their tone is acute, grave, or intermediate; the details of all which is the business of the metrical treatises.

(2) A syllable is a sound without signification, composed of a mute and a vowel. For *gr* without *a* is not a syllable; with *a*, as *gra*, it is. But these differences, also, are the subject of the metrical art.

(3) A conjunction is a sound without signification . . . of such a nature as, out of several sounds, each of them significant, to form one significant sound.

(4) An article is a sound without signification which marks the beginning or the end of a sentence; or distinguishes, as when we say *the* [word] *φημι*, the [word] *περ* etc.

(5) A noun is a sound composed of other sounds; significant without expression of time, and of which no part is by itself significant. For even in double words the parts are not taken in the sense that separately belongs to them. Thus, in the word "Theodorus," "dorus" is not significant.

(6) A verb is a sound composed of other sounds; significant, with expression of time, and of which, as of the noun, no part is by itself significant. Thus, in the words "man," "white," indication of time is not included. In the words "he walks," "he walked," etc., it is included; the one expressing the present time, the other the past.

(7) Cases belong to nouns and verbs. Some cases express relation; as "of," "to," and the like. Others number; as "man" or "men," etc. Others relate to action or pronunciation, as those of interrogation, of command, etc. For *ἐβήδισε*; [did he go?] and *βήδιζε* [go] are verbal cases of that kind.

(8) Discourse or speech is a sound significant, composed of other sounds, some of which are significant by themselves: for all discourse is not composed of verbs and nouns; the definition of "man," for instance. Discourse or speech may subsist without a verb: some significant part, however, it must contain; significant, as the word "Cleon" is in "Cleon walks."

A discourse or speech is one, in two senses: either as it signifies one thing or several things made one by conjunction. Thus, the *Iliad* is one by conjunction: the definition of man by signifying one thing.

## XXV

Of words, some are single, by which I mean composed of parts not significant; and some double: of which last some have one part significant and the other not significant, and some both parts significant. A word may also be triple, quadruple, etc., like many used by those who love hard words, as *Hermocæixanthus*. Every word is either common, or foreign, or metaphorical, or ornamental, or invented, or extended, or contracted, or altered

By common words I mean such as are in general and established use, by foreign, such as belong to a different language, so that the same word may evidently be both common and foreign, though not to the same people. The word *σιγγνον* to the Cyprians is common; to us, foreign

A metaphorical word is a word transferred from its proper sense; either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from one species to another, or in the way of analogy

(1) From genus to species, as:

Secure in yonder port my vessel stands

For to be at anchor is one species of standing or being fixed

(2) From species to genus, as:

to Ulysses,

A thousand generous deeds we owe

For a thousand is a certain definite many, which is here used for many in general.

(3) From one species to another, as: *χαλκῷ ἀπὸ ψυχῆν ἀρύσας* And *ταμὼν ἀτειρέϊ χαλκῷ*. For here the poet uses *ταμεῖν*, to cut off, instead of *ἀρύσαι*, to draw forth, and *ἀρύσαι* instead of *ταμεῖν* each being a species of taking away.

(4) In the way of analogy—when, of four terms, the second bears the same relation to the first as the fourth to the third; in which case the fourth may be substituted for the second, and the second for the fourth. And sometimes the proper term is also introduced besides its relative term.

Thus, a cup bears the same relation to Bacchus as a shield to Mars. A shield, therefore, may be called the "cup of Mars," and a cup the "shield of Bacchus." Again, evening being to day what old age is to life, the evening may be called the old age of the day, and old age the evening of life; or as Empedocles has expressed it: "Life's setting sun." It sometimes happens that there is no proper analogous term answering to the term borrowed; which yet may be used in the same manner as if there were. For instance, to sow is the term

appropriated to the action of dispersing seed upon the earth ; but the dispersion of rays from the sun is expressed by no appropriated term ; it is, however, with respect to the sun's light, what sowing is with respect to seed. Hence the poet's expression of the sun :

sowing abroad  
His heaven-created flame.

There is also another way of using this kind of metaphor, by adding to the borrowed word a negation of some of those qualities which belong to it in its proper sense ; as if instead of calling a shield the "cup of Mars," we should call it the "wineless cup."

An invented word is a word never before used by anyone but coined by the poet himself ; for such it appears there are, as ἔρυνγες for κέρατα horns, or ἀρητήρ for ἱερεὺς a priest.

A word is extended when, for the proper vowel, a longer is substituted, or a syllable is inserted. A word is contracted when some part of it is retrenched. Thus, πόλῃς for πόλεως and πηληϊδεω for πηλεΐδου are extended words ; contracted, such as κρῖ and δῶ and ὕψ, e.g. μία γίνεται ἀμφοτέρωι ὕψ

An altered word is a word of which part remains in its usual state, and part is of the poet's making, as in δεξιτρὸν κατὰ μαζόν, δεξιτερός is for δεξιός ;

Further, *ηοιυς* are divided into masculine, feminine, and neuter. The masculine are those which end in ν, ρ, σ or in some letter compounded of σ and a mute ; these are two, ψ and ξ. The feminine are those which end in the vowels always long, as η, or ω ; or in α of the doubtful vowels ; so that the masculine and the feminine terminations are equal in number, for as to ψ and ξ, they are the same with terminations in ο. No noun ends in a mute or a short vowel. There are but three ending in ι. μέλι, κόμμι, πέπερι five ending in υ : πῶν, νᾶπν, γόνν, δόρν, ἄστυ.

The neuter terminate in these two last-mentioned vowels and in ν and σ

## XXVI

The excellence of diction consists in being perspicuous without being mean. The most perspicuous is that which is composed of common words, but at the same time it is mean. Such is the poetry of Cleophon and that of Sthenelus. That language, on the contrary, is elevated and remote from the vulgar idiom which employs unusual words. By unusual I mean foreign, metaphorical, extended—all, in short, that are not common words. Yet should a poet compose his diction entirely of such words, the result would be either an enigma or a barbarous jargon ; an enigma, if composed of metaphors, a barbarous jargon, if composed of foreign words. For the essence of an enigma consists in putting together things apparently inconsistent and impossible, and at the same time saying nothing but what is true. Now this cannot be effected

by the mere arrangement of the words ; by the metaphorical use of them it may, as in this enigma :

A man I once beheld, [ and wondering viewed, ]  
Who, on another, brass with fire had glued.

With respect to barbarism, it arises from the use of foreign words. A judicious intermixture is, therefore, requisite.

Thus, the foreign word, the metaphorical, the ornamental, and the other species before-mentioned, will raise the language above the vulgar idiom, and common words will give it perspicuity. But nothing contributes more considerably to produce clearness, without vulgarity of diction, than extensions, contractions, and alterations of words ; for here the variation from the proper form, being unusual, will give elevation to the expression, and at the same time, what is retained of usual speech will give it clearness. It is without reason, therefore, that some critics have censured these modes of speech, and ridiculed the poet for the use of them, as old Euclid did, objecting that " versification would be an easy business if it were permitted to lengthen words at pleasure "—and then giving a burlesque example of that sort of diction.

Undoubtedly, when these licences appear to be thus purposely used, the thing becomes ridiculous. In the employment of all the species of unusual words moderation is necessary ; for metaphors, foreign words, or any of the others, improperly used, and with a design to be ridiculous, would produce the same effect. But how great a difference is made by a proper and temperate use of such words, may be seen in heroic verse. Let anyone only substitute common words in the place of the metaphorical, the foreign, and others of the same kind, and he will be convinced of the truth of what I say. For example, the same iambic verse occurs in Aeschylus and in Euripides, but, by means of a single alteration—the substitution of a foreign for a common and usual word—one of these verses appears beautiful, the other ordinary. For Aeschylus, in his *Philoctetes*, says :

φαγέδαινα, η μου σαρξ ἐσθίει ποδός.

The cankerous wound that eats my flesh

But Euripides, instead of ἐσθίει [eats] uses θοῦναι [feasts on].

The same difference will appear, if in this verse,

Νῦν δέ μ' ἐὼν ὀλίγος τε καὶ οὔτιδανός καὶ ἀκινς,

we substitute common words, and say :

Νῦν δ' ἐ' μ' ἐὼν μικρός τε καὶ ἡσθεϊκός καὶ ἀειδής

So again, should we for the following :

Δίφρον ἀεικέλιον καταθείς, ὀλίγην ἔε τράπεζαν

substitute this.

Δίθρου μοχθηρὸν καταθεῖς, μικράν τε τράπεζαν  
Or change ἥϊόνες βοόωσι ("the cliffs *rebellow*") to  
ἥϊόνες κράζουσιν ("the cliffs *resound*").

Arifhrades also endeavoured to throw ridicule upon the tragic poets, for making use of such expressions as no one would think of using in common speech: as δωμάτων ἄπο instead of ἀπὸ δωμάτων and σέθεν, and ἐγὼ δὲ νιν and ἀχιλλέως περὶ instead of περὶ ἀχιλλέως etc. Now it is precisely owing to their being *not* in common use that such expressions have the effect of giving elevation to the diction. But this he did not know.

To employ with propriety any of these modes of speech—the double words, the foreign, etc.—is a great excellence; but the greatest of all is to be happy in the use of metaphor; for it is this alone which cannot be acquired, and which, consisting in a quick discernment of resemblances, is a certain mark of genius.

Of the different kinds of words, the double are best suited to dithyrambic poetry, the foreign to heroic, the metaphorical to iambic. In heroic poetry, indeed, they have all their place; but to iambic verse, which is, as much as may be, an imitation of common speech, those words which are used in common speech are best adapted, and such are the common, the metaphorical, and the ornamental.

Concerning tragedy, and the imitation by action, enough has now been said.

### PART III

## OF THE EPIC POEM

### I

WITH RESPECT to that species of poetry which imitates by narration, and in hexameter verse, it is obvious that the fable ought to be dramatically constructed like that of tragedy; and that it should have for its subject one entire and perfect action, having a beginning, a middle, and an end; so that, forming like an animal a complete whole, it may afford its proper pleasure, widely differing in its construction from history, which necessarily treats, not of one action, but of one time, and of all the events that happened to one person or to many during that time; events the relation of which to each other is merely casual. For, as the naval action at Salamis, and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily, were events of the same time, unconnected by any relation to a common end or purpose; so also in successive events, we sometimes see one thing follow another without being connected to it by such relation. And this is the practice of the generality of poets. Even in this, therefore, as we have observed, the superiority of Homer's genius is apparent,

that he did not attempt to bring the whole war, though an entire action with beginning and end, into his poem. It would have been too vast an object, and not easily comprehended in one view; or had he forced it into a moderate compass it would have been perplexed by its variety. Instead of this, selecting one part only of the war, he has from the rest introduced many episodes—such as the catalogue of the ships and others—by which he has diversified his poem. Other poets take for their subject the actions of one person, or of one period of time, or an action which, though one, is composed of too many parts. Thus, the author of the *Cypriacs* and of the *Little Iliad*. Hence it is that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, each of them furnish matter for one tragedy, or two at most; but from the *Cypriacs* many may be taken, and from the *Little Iliad* more than eight, as: *The Contest for the Armour*, *Philoctetes*, *Neoptolemus*, *Eurypylus*, *The Vagrant*, *The Spartan Women*, *The Fall of Troy*, *The Return of the Fleet*, *Sinon*, and *The Trojan Women*.

Again, the epic poem must also agree with the tragic as to its two kinds: it must be simple or complicated, moral or disastrous. Its parts also, setting aside music and decoration, are the same, for it requires revolutions, discoveries, and disasters, and it must be furnished with proper sentiments and diction; of all which Homer gave both the first and the most perfect example. Thus, of his two poems the *Iliad* is of the simple and disastrous kind, the *Odyssey* complicated (for it abounds throughout with discoveries) and moral. Add to this, that in language and sentiments he has surpassed all poets.

## II

The epic poem differs from tragedy in the length of its plan and in its metre.

With respect to length a sufficient measure has already been assigned. It should be such as to admit of our comprehending at one view the beginning and the end, and this would be the case if the epic poem were reduced from its ancient length, so as not to exceed that of such a number of tragedies as are performed successively at one hearing. But there is a circumstance in the nature of epic poetry which affords it peculiar latitude in the extension of its plan. It is not in the power of tragedy to imitate several different actions performed at the same time; it can imitate only that one which occupies the stage, and in which the actors are employed. But the epic imitation, being narrative, admits of many such simultaneous incidents, properly related to the subject, which swell the poem to a considerable size.

And this gives it a great advantage, both in point of magnificence, and also as it enables the poet to relieve his hearer and diversify his work by a variety of dissimilar episodes; for it is to the satiety naturally arising from similarity that tragedies frequently owe their ill success.

With respect to metre, the heroic is established by experience as the most proper, so that, should anyone compose a narrative poem in any other, or in a variety of metres, he would be thought guilty of a great impropriety. For the



heroic is the gravest and most majestic of all measures ; and hence it is that it peculiarly admits the use of foreign and metaphorical expressions ; for in this respect also, the narrative imitation is abundant and various beyond the rest. But the iambic and trochaic have more motion ; the latter being adapted to dance, the other to action and business. To mix these different metres, as Chaeremon has done, would be still more absurd. No one, therefore, has ever attempted to compose a poem of an extended plan in any other than heroic verse ; nature itself, as we before observed, pointing out the proper choice.

### III

Among the many just claims of Homer to our praise, this is one—that he is the only poet who seems to have understood what part in his poem it was proper for him to take himself. The poet, in his own person, should speak as little as possible ; for he is not then the imitator. But other poets, ambitious to figure throughout themselves, imitate but little and seldom. Homer, after a few preparatory lines, immediately introduces a man, a woman, or some other character ; for all have their character—nowhere are the manners neglected.

### IV

The surprising is necessary in tragedy ; but the epic poem goes further and admits even the improbable and incredible, from which the highest degree of the surprising results, because there the action is not seen. The circumstances, for example, of the pursuit of Hector by Achilles, are such as, upon the stage, would appear ridiculous—the Grecian army standing still and taking no part in the pursuit, and Achilles making signs to them by the motion of his head not to interfere. But in the epic poem this escapes our notice. Now the wonderful always pleases, as is evident from the additions which men always make in relating anything in order to gratify the hearers.

### V

It is from Homer principally that other poets have learned the art of feigning well. It consists in a sort of sophism. When one thing is observed to be constantly accompanied or followed by another, men are apt to conclude that if the latter is, or has happened, the former must also be, or must have happened. But this is an error. For knowing the latter to be true, the mind is betrayed into the false inference that the first is true also.

### VI

The poet should prefer impossibilities which appear probable to such things as, though possible, appear improbable. Far from producing a plan made up of improbable incidents, he should, if possible, admit no one circumstance of that kind ; or, if he does, it should be exterior to the action itself,

like the ignorance of Oedipus concerning the manner in which Laius died; not within the drama, like the narrative of what happened at the Pythian games in the *Electra*; or in the *Mysians*, the man who travels from Tegea to Mysia without speaking. To say that without these circumstances the fable would have been destroyed is a ridiculous excuse: the poet should take care, from the first, not to construct his fable in that manner. If, however, anything of this kind has been admitted, and yet is made to pass under some colour of probability, it may be allowed, though even in itself absurd. Thus in the *Odyssey*, the improbable account of the manner in which Ulysses was landed upon the shore of Ithaca is such as in the hands of an ordinary poet would evidently have been intolerable; but here the absurdity is concealed under the various beauties of other kinds with which the poet has embellished it.

The diction should be most laboured in the idle parts of the poem—those in which neither manners nor sentiments prevail; for the manners and the sentiments are only obscured by too splendid a diction.

#### PART IV

### OF CRITICAL OBJECTIONS AND THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THEY ARE TO BE ANSWERED

#### I

WITH RESPECT to critical objections and the answers to them, the number and nature of the different sources from which they may be drawn will be clearly understood, if we consider them in the following manner.

(1) The poet, being an imitator, like the painter or any other artist of that kind, must necessarily, when he imitates, have in view one of these three objects: he must represent things such as they were or are; or such as they are said to be and believed to be; or such as they should be.

(2) Again, all this he is to express in words, either common, or foreign and metaphorical, or varied by some of those many modifications and peculiarities of language which are the privilege of poets.

(3) To this we must add that what is right in the poetic art is a distinct consideration from what is right in the political or any other art. The faults of poetry are of two kinds, essential and accidental. If the poet has undertaken to imitate without talents for imitation, his poetry will be essentially faulty. But if he is right in applying himself to poetic imitation, yet in imitating is occasionally wrong; as if a horse, for example, were represented moving both his right legs at once; or if he has committed mistakes, or described things impossible, with respect to other arts, that of physic, for instance, or any other—all such faults, whatever they may be, are not essential, but accidental, faults in the poetry.

## II

To the foregoing considerations, then, we must have recourse in order to obviate the doubts and objections of the critics.

For, in the first place, suppose the poet to have represented things impossible with respect to some other art. This is certainly a fault. Yet it may be an excusable fault, provided the end of the poet's art be more effectually obtained by it ; that is, according to what has already been said of that end, if by this means that, or any other part, of the poem is made to produce a more striking effect. The pursuit of Hector is an instance. If, indeed, this end might as well, or nearly as well, have been attained without departing from the principles of the particular art in question, the fault, in that case, could not be justified, since faults of every kind should, if possible, be avoided.

Still, we are to consider further whether a fault be in things essential to the poetic art, or foreign and incidental to it ; for it is a far more pardonable fault to be ignorant, for instance, that a hind has no horns, than to paint one badly.

## III

Further, if it be objected to the poet that he has not represented things conformably to truth, he may answer that he has represented them as they should be. This was the answer of Sophocles, that " he drew mankind such as they should be ; Euripides, such as they are." And this is the proper answer.

But if the poet has represented things in neither of these ways, he may answer that he has represented them as they are said and believed to be. Of this kind are the poetical descriptions of the gods. It cannot, perhaps, be said that they are either what is best or what is true ; but, as Xenophanes says, opinions "taken up at random"; these are things, however, not "clearly known."

Again, what the poet has exhibited is, perhaps, not what is best, but it is the fact ; as in the passage about the arms of the sleeping soldiers :

... fixed upright in the earth  
Their spears stood by.

For such was the custom at that time, as it is now among the Illyrians.

## IV

In order to judge whether what is said or done by any character be well or ill, we are not to consider that speech or action alone, whether in itself it be good or bad, but also by whom it is spoken or done, to whom, at what time, in what manner, or for what end—whether, for instance, in order to obtain some greater good or to avoid some greater evil.

## V

(1) For the solution of some objections we must have recourse to the diction. For example :

οὐῆας μὲν πρῶτου

On mules and dogs the infection first began.

This may be defended by saying that the poet has, perhaps, used the word οὐῆας in its foreign acceptation of sentinels, not in its proper sense, of mules

So also in the passage where it is said of Dolon :

εἶδος μὲν ἔην κακός

of form unhappy

The meaning is, not that his person was deformed, but that his face was ugly ; for the Cretans use the word *ευειδες*—"well-formed"—to express a beautiful face.

Again :

ζωρότερου δὲ κέραε

Here the meaning is not "mix it strong," as for intemperate drinkers, but "mix it quickly."

(2) The following passages may be defended by metaphor

Now pleasing sleep had seal'd each mortal eye ;

Stretch'd in the tents the Grecian leaders lie ;

The immortals slumber'd on their thrones above.

Again :

When on the Trojan plain his anxious eye

Watchful he fix'd . . .

And,

ἀνλῶν συρנגγων θ' ὀμαδόν

For "all" is put metaphorically instead of "many"; all being a species of many.

Here also :

The bear alone,

Still shines exalted in th' aetherial plain,

Nor bathes his flaming forehead in the main.

Alone is metaphorical . the most remarkable thing in any kind, we speak of as the *only* one

We may have recourse also :

(3) To accent, as the following passage :

δίδομεν δέ οἱ εὖχος ἀρέσθαι,

and this: τὸ μὲν οὐ καταπνέθεται ὄμβρω—were solved by Hippias of Thasos.

(4) To punctuation, as in this passage of Empedocles.

αἴψα δὲ θνήτ' ἐφύοντο τὰ πρὶν μάθου ἀθάνατ' εἶναι,

i.e. ζωρά τε πρὶ ν κέρητο .

Things, before immortal,  
Mortal became, and mixed before unmixed,  
[Their courses changed.]

(5) To ambiguity, as in παρῳχκεν δὲ πλέων νύξ where the word πλέων is ambiguous.

(6) To customary speech: thus, wine mixed with water is called οἶνος wine; hence, Ganymede is said,

Διὶ οἶνοχοεῖν,

to "pour the wine to Jove"; though wine is not the liquor of the gods. This, however, may also be defended by metaphor.

Thus, again, artificers in iron are called χαλκεῖς, literally, braziers. Of this kind is the expression of the poet, κνημὶς νεοτεύκτου κασσιτέροιο 'Greaves of new-wrought tin.'

(7) When a word in any passage appears to express a contradiction, we must consider, in how many different senses it may there be taken. Here, for instance :

τῇ ῥ' ἔσχετο χάλκεου ἔγχος  
'There stuck the lance.'

the meaning is, was "stopped" only, or "repelled."

Of how many different senses a word is capable may best be discovered by considering the different senses that are opposed to it.

We may also say, with Glaucon, that some critics first take things for granted without foundation, and then argue from these previous decisions of their own; and, having once pronounced their judgement, condemn, as an inconsistency, whatever is contrary to their pre-conceived opinion. Of this kind is the cavil of the critics concerning Icarus. Taking it for granted that he was a Lacedemonian, they thence infer the absurdity of supposing Telemachus not to have seen him when he went to Lacedemon. But perhaps what the Cephallenians say may be the truth. They assert that the wife of Ulysses was of their country, and that the name of her father was not Icarus, but Icadius. The objection itself, therefore, is probably founded on a mistake.

## VI

The impossible, in general, is to be justified by referring either to the end of poetry itself, or to what is best, or to opinion.

For with respect to poetry, impossibilities, rendered probable, are preferable to things improbable, though possible.

With respect also to what is best, the imitations of poetry should resemble the paintings of Zeuxis; the example should be more perfect than nature.

To opinion, or what is commonly said to be, may be referred even such things as are improbable and absurd; and it may also be said that events of that kind are, sometimes, not really improbable; since "it is probable that many things should happen contrary to probability"

## VII

When things are said which appear to be contradictory, we must examine them as we do in logical confutation: whether the same thing be spoken of; whether in the same respect, and in the same sense . . .

## VIII

Improbability and vicious manners, when excused by no necessity, are just objects of critical censure. Such is the improbability in the *Aegeus* of Euripides, and the vicious character of Menelaus in his *Orestes*.

Thus, the sources from which the critics draw their objections are five: they object to things as impossible, or improbable, or if immoral tendency, or contradictory, or contrary to technical accuracy. The answers, which are twelve in number, may be deduced from what has been said.

## PART V

### OF THE SUPERIORITY OF TRAGIC TO EPIC POETRY

#### I

IT MAY be inquired, further, which of the two imitations, the epic or the tragic, deserves the preference.

If that which is the least vulgar or popular of the two be the best, and that be such which is calculated for the better sort of spectators—the imitation which extends to every circumstance must evidently be the most vulgar or popular; for there the imitators have recourse to every kind of motion and gesticulation, as if the audience, without the aid of action, were incapable of understanding them: like bad flute-players, who whirl themselves round when they would imitate the motion of the discus, and pull the coryphaeus when Scylla is the subject. Such is tragedy. It may also be compared to what the modern actors are in the estimation of their predecessors; for Myniscus used to call Callipides, on account of his intemperate action, the ape, and Tyndarus

was censured on the same account. What these performers are with respect to their predecessors, the tragic imitation, when entire, is to the epic. The latter, then, it is urged, addresses itself to hearers of the better sort, to whom the addition of gesture is superfluous, but tragedy is for the people; and being, therefore, the most vulgar kind of imitation, is evidently the inferior.

## II

But now, in the first place, this censure falls, not upon the poet's art, but upon that of the actor; for the gesticulation may be equally laboured in the recitation of an epic poem, as it was by Sosistratus; and in singing, as by Mnasisheus, the Opuntian.

Again, all gesticulation is not to be condemned, since even all dancing is not; but such only as is unbecoming—such as was objected to Callipides, and is now objected to others whose gestures resemble those of immodest women.

Further, tragedy, as well as the epic, is capable of producing its effect even without action; we can judge of it perfectly by reading. If, then, in other respects, tragedy be superior, it is sufficient that the fault here objected is not essential to it.

## III

Tragedy has the advantage in the following respects: It possesses all that is possessed by the epic; it might even adopt its metre; and to this it makes no inconsiderable addition, in the music and the decoration; by the latter of which the illusion is heightened, and the pleasure arising from the action is rendered more sensible and striking.

It has the advantage of greater clearness and distinctness of impression, as well in reading as in representation.

It has also that of attaining the end of its imitation in a shorter compass: for the effect is more pleasurable when produced by a short and close series of impressions, than when weakened by diffusion through a long extent of time; as the *Oedipus* of Sophocles, for example, would be if it were drawn out to the length of the *Iliad*.

Further: there is less unity in all epic imitation, as appears from this—that any epic poem will furnish matter for several tragedies. For, supposing the poet to choose a fable strictly one, the consequence must be either that his poem, if proportionably contracted, will appear curtailed and defective, or, if extended to the usual length, will become weak and, as it were, diluted. If, on the other hand, we suppose him to employ several fables—that is, a fable composed of several actions—his imitation is no longer strictly one. The *Iliad*, for example, and the *Odyssey* contain many such subordinate parts, each of which has a certain magnitude and unity of its own; yet is the construction of those poems as perfect, and as nearly approaching to the imitation of a single action, as possible.

## IV

If, then, tragedy be superior to the epic in all these respects, and also in the peculiar end at which it aims (for each species ought to afford, not any sort of pleasure indiscriminately, but such only as has been pointed out), it evidently follows that tragedy, as it attains more effectually the end of the art itself, must deserve the preference.

And thus much concerning tragic and epic poetry in general and their several species, the number and the differences of their parts, the causes of their beauties and their defects, the censures of critics, and the principles on which they are to be answered.



# SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

## *Defence of Poesy*

WHEN THE right virtuous Edward Wotton and I were at the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an esquire in his stable; and he, according to the fertility of the Italian wit, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice, but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplations therein which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine ears were at any time more loaded, than when—either angered with slow payment, or moved with our learner-like admiration—he exercised his speech in the praise of his faculty. He said soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of soldiers. He said they were the masters of war and ornaments of peace, speedy goers and strong abiders, triumphers both in camps and courts. Nay, to so unbelieving a point he proceeded, as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a prince as to be a good horseman; skill of government was but a pedanteria<sup>1</sup> in comparison. Then would he add certain praises, by telling what a peerless beast the horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse. But thus much at least with his no few words he drove into me, that self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves be parties.

Wherein if Pugliano's strong affection and weak arguments will not satisfy you, I will give you a nearer example of myself, who, I know not by what mischance, in these my not old years and idlest times, having slipped into the title of a poet, am provoked to say something unto you in the defence of that my unelected vocation, which if I handle with more goodwill than good reasons, bear with me, since the scholar is to be pardoned that followed the steps of his master.

And yet I must say that, as I have just cause to make a pitiful defence of poor poetry, which from almost the highest estimation of learning is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children, so have I need to bring some more available proofs, since the former is by no man barred of his deserved credit, the silly latter has had even the names of philosophers used to the defacing of it with great danger of civil war among the muses.

And first, truly, to all them that, professing learning, inveigh against poetry, may justly be objected that they go very near to ungratefulness, to seek to

<sup>1</sup> A piece of academic learning.

deface that which, in the noblest nations and languages that are known, has been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges. And will they now play the hedgehog, that being received into the den, drove out his host? Or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents? Let learned Greece in any of her manifold sciences be able to show me one book before Musaeus, Homer, and Hesiod, all three nothing else but poets. Nay, let any history be brought that can say any writers were there before them, if they were not men of the same skill, as Orpheus, Linus, and some other are named, who, having been the first of that country that made pens deliverers of their knowledge to their posterity, may justly challenge to be called their fathers in learning. For not only in time they had this priority (although in itself antiquity be venerable) but went before them as causes, to draw with their charming sweetness the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge. So as Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts, indeed stony and beastly people. So among the Romans were Livius Andronicus and Ennius; so in the Italian language the first that made it aspire to be a treasure-house of science were the poets Dante, Boccace, and Petrarch; so in our English were Gower and Chaucer, after whom, encouraged and delighted with their excellent foregoing, others have followed to beautify our mother tongue, as well in the same kind as in other arts.

This did so notably show itself, that the philosophers of Greece dare not a long time appear to the world but under the masks of poets. So Thales, Empedocles, and Parmenides sang their natural philosophy in verses; so did Pythagoras and Phocylides their moral counsels; so did Tyrtæus in war matters, and Solon in matters of policy; or rather they, being poets, did exercise their delightful vein in those points of highest knowledge which before them lay hid to the world. For that wise Solon was directly a poet it is manifest, having written in verse the notable fable of the Atlantic Island which was continued by Plato. And truly even Plato whosoever well considered, shall find that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and beauty depended most of poetry. For all stand upon dialogues; where he feigned many honest burgesses of Athens to speak of such matters that, if they had been set on the rack, they would never have confessed them: besides his poetical describing the circumstances of their meetings, as the well-ordering of a banquet, the delicacy of a walk, with interlacing mere tales, as Gyges' *Ring* and others, which who knew not to be flowers of poetry did never walk into Apollo's garden.

And even historiographers (although their lips sound of things done, and verity be written in their foreheads), have been glad to borrow both fashion and perchance weight of poets. So Herodotus entitled his history by the name of the nine Muses; and both he and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles which no man could affirm, or, if that be denied me, long

orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced.

So that truly neither philosopher nor historiographer could, at the first, have entered into the gates of popular judgements, if they had not taken a great passport of poetry; which in all nations at this day, where learning flourishes not, is plain to be seen, in all which they have some feeling of poetry. In Turkey, besides their lawgiving divines they have no other writers but poets. In our neighbour-country Ireland, where truly learning goes very bare, yet are their poets held in a devout reverence. Even among the most barbarous and simple Indians, where no writing is, yet have they their poets, who make and sing songs (which they call areytos), both of their ancestors' deeds and praises of their gods. A sufficient probability that, if ever learning come among them, it must be by having their hard dull wits softened and sharpened with the sweet delights of poetry; for until they find a pleasure in the exercises of the mind, great promises of much knowledge will little persuade them that know not the fruits of knowledge. In Wales, the true remnant of the ancient Britons, as there are good authorities to show the long time they had poets, which they called bards, so through all the conquests of Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, some of whom did seek to ruin all memory of learning from among them, yet do their poets even to this day last; so as it is not more notable in soon beginning, than in long continuing.

But since the authors of most of our sciences were the Romans, and before them the Greeks, let us a little stand upon their authorities, but even so far as to see what names they have given unto this now scorned skill. Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet, as by his conjoined words, *vaticinium* and *vaticinari*, is manifest; so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow upon this heart-ravishing knowledge. And so far were they carried into the admiration thereof, that they thought in the chanceable hitting upon any such verses great foretokens of their following fortunes were placed; whereupon grew the word of *Sortes Virgilianae*, when by sudden opening Virgil's book they lighted upon any verse of his making; whereof the Histories of the Emperors Lives are full: as of Albinus, the governor of our island, who in his childhood met with this verse:

*Arma amens eapio, nec sat rationis in armis,*<sup>2</sup>

and in his age performed it; which although it were a very vain and godless superstition, as also it was to think that spirits were commanded by such verses—whereupon this word charms, derived of *carmina*, came—so yet served it to show the great reverence those wits were held in, and altogether not without ground, since both the oracles of Delphos and Sibylla's prophecies were wholly delivered in verses; for that same exquisite observing of number

<sup>2</sup> "Distracted, I seize my arms, nor have I sufficient purpose in arms." Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii. 314.

and measure in words, and that high-flying liberty of conceit proper to the poet, did seem to have some divine force in it.

And may not I presume a little further to show the reasonableness of this word *vates*, and say that the holy David's Psalms are a divine poem? If I do, I shall not do it without the testimony of great learned men, both ancient and modern. But even the name Psalms will speak for me, which, being interpreted, is nothing but Songs; then, that it is fully written in metre, as all learned Hebricians agree, although the rules be not yet fully found; lastly and principally, his handling his prophecy, which is merely poetical. For what else is the awaking his musical instruments, the often and free changing of persons, his notable *prosopopoeias*, when he makes you, as it were, see God coming in His majesty, his telling of the beasts' joyfulness and hill's leaping, but a heavenly poesy, wherein almost he shows himself a passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith? But truly, now, having named him, I fear me I seem to profane that holy name, applying it to poetry, which is among us thrown down to so ridiculous an estimation. But they that with quiet judgements will look a little deeper into it, shall find the end and working of it such as, being rightly applied, deserve not to be scourged out of the church of God.

But now let us see how the Greeks named it and how they deemed of it. The Greeks called him a Poet, which name has, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It comes of this word *poiein*, which is "to make"; wherein I know not whether by luck or wisdom we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a maker. Which name, how high and incomparable a title it is, I had rather were known by marking the scope of other sciences than by my partial allegation.

There is no art delivered upto mankind that has not the works of nature for his principal object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend as they become actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth. So does the astronomer look upon the stars, and, by that he sees, set down what order nature has taken therein. So do the geometrician and arithmetician in their divers sorts of quantities. So does the musician in times tell you which by nature agree, which not. The natural philosopher thereon has his name, and the moral philosopher stands upon the natural virtues, vices, and passions of man; and "follow nature," says he, "therein, and thou shalt not err." The lawyer says what men have determined; the historian what men have done. The grammarian speaks only of the rules of speech, and the rhetorician and logician, considering what in nature will soonest prove and persuade, thereon give artificial rules, which still are compassed within the circle of a question, according to the proposed matter. The physician weighs the nature of man's body, and the nature of things helpful or hurtful unto it. And the metaphysic, though it be in the second and abstract notions, and therefore be counted supernatural, yet does he, indeed, build upon the depth of nature.

Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, does grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like; so as he goes hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.

But let those things alone, and go to man—for whom as the other things are, so it seems in him her uttermost cunning is employed—and know whether she have brought forth so true a lover as Theagenes; so constant a friend as Pylades; so valiant a man as Orlando; so right a prince as Xenophon's Cyrus; so excellent a man every way as Virgil's Aeneas? Neither let this be jestingly conceived, because the works of the one be essential, the other in imitation or fiction; for any understanding knows the skill of the artificer stands in that idea, or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet had that idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them. Which delivering forth, also, is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air; but so far substantially it works, not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him. Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature; but rather give right honour to the Heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature. Which in nothing he shows so much as in poetry, when, with the force of a divine breath, he brings things forth far surpassing her doings, with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam—since our erected wit makes us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keeps us from reaching unto it. But these arguments will by few be understood, and by fewer granted; thus much I hope will be given me, that the Greeks, with some probability of reason, gave him the name above all names of learning

Now let us go to a more ordinary opening of him, that the truth may be the more palpable; and so, I hope, though we get not so unmatched a praise as the etymology of his names will grant, yet his very description, which no man will deny, shall not justly be barred from a principal commendation.

Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termed it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight.

Of this have been three several kinds. The chief, both in antiquity and excellency, were they that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God.

Such were David in his Psalms; Solomon in his Song of Songs, in his Ecclesiastes and Proverbs; Moses and Deborah in their Hymns; and the writer of Job; which, beside other, the learned Emanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius do entitle the poetical part of the Scripture. Against these none will speak that has the Holy Ghost in due holy reverence. In this kind, though in a full wrong divinity, were Orpheus, Amphion, Homer in his hymns, and many other, both Greeks and Romans. And this poesy must be used by whosoever will follow St. James his counsel in singing Psalms when they are merry; and I know is used with the fruit of comfort by some, when, in sorrowful pangs of their death-bringing sins, they find the consolation of the never-leaving goodness.

The second kind is of them that deal with matters philosophical: either moral, as Tyrteus, Phocylides, and Cato; or natural, as Lucretius and Virgil's Georgics; or astronomical, as Manilius and Pontanus; or historical, as Lucan; which who mislike, the fault is in their judgement, quite out of taste, and not in the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge.

But because this second sort is wrapped within the fold of the proposed subject, and takes not the free course of his own invention, whether they properly be poets or no let grammarians dispute, and go to the third, indeed right poets, of whom chiefly this question arises. Betwixt whom and these second is such a kind of difference as betwixt the meaner sort of painters, who counterfeit only such faces as are set before them, and the more excellent, who having no law but wit, bestow that in colours upon you which is fittest for the eye to see; as the constant though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in herself another's fault; wherein he painted not Lucretia, whom he never saw, but painted the outward beauty of such a virtue. For these third be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight; and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, has been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be. These be they that, as the first and most noble sort, may justly be termed *vates*; so these are waited on in the most excellent languages and best understandings with the foredescribed names of poets. For these, indeed, do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved; which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them.

These be subdivided into sundry more special denominations. The most notable be the heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral, and certain others, some of these being termed according to the matter they deal with, some by the sorts of verses they liked best to write in—for indeed the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numerous kind of writing which is called verse. Indeed but apparelled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry, since there have been many most excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that

need never answer to the name of poets. For Xenophon, who did imitate so excellently as to give us *effigiem justii imperii*—the portraiture of a just empire, under the name of Cyprus (as Cicero said of him) made therein an absolute heroical poem; so did Helidorus in his sugared invention of that picture of love in Theagenes and Chariclea; and yet both these wrote in prose. Which I speak to show that it is not rhyming and versing that make a poet (no more than a long gown makes an advocate, who, though he pleaded in armour, should be an advocate and no soldier), but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by. Although indeed the Senate of Poets has chosen verse as their fittest raiment, meaning, as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to go beyond them; not speaking (table-talk fashion, or like men in a dream), words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but peizing each syllable of each word by just proportion, according to the dignity of the subject.

Now, therefore, it shall not be amiss, first to weigh this latter sort of poetry by his works, and then by his parts; and if in neither of these anatomies he be condemnable, I hope we shall obtain a more favourable sentence. This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of. This, according to the inclination of man, bred many-formed impressions. For some that thought this felicity principally to be gotten by knowledge, and no knowledge to be so high or heavenly as acquaintance with the stars, gave themselves to astronomy; others, persuading themselves to be demi-gods if they knew the causes of things, became natural and supernatural philosophers. Some an admirable delight drew to music, and some the certainty of demonstration to the mathematics; but all, one and other, having this scope: to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his own divine essence. But when by the balance of experience it was found that the astronomer, looking to the stars, might fall into a ditch, that the inquiring philosopher might be blind in himself, and the mathematician might draw forth a straight line with a crooked heart; then lo! did proof, the overruler of opinions, make manifest, that all these are but serving sciences, which, as they have each a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistress-knowledge, by the Greeks called *architektonike*, which stands, as I think, in the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing, and not of well-knowing only; even as the saddler's next end is to make a good saddle, but his further end to serve a nobler faculty, which is horsemanship; so the horseman's to soldiery; and the soldier not only to have the skill, but to perform the practice of a soldier. So that the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action, those skills that most serve to bring forth that have a most just title to

be princes over all the rest; wherein, if we can show, the poet is worthy to have it before any other competitors.

Among whom as principal challengers step forth the moral philosophers; whom, me thinks, I see coming toward me with a sullen gravity (as though they could not abide vice by daylight), rudely clothed, for to witness outwardly their contempt of outward things; with books in their hands against glory, whereto they set their names; sophistically speaking against subtlety; and angry with any man in whom they see the foul fault of anger. These men, casting largesse as they go of Definitions, Divisions, and Distinctions, with a scornful interrogative do soberly ask whether it be possible to find any path so ready to lead a man to virtue, as that which teaches what virtue is, and teaches it not only by delivering forth his very being, his causes and effects, but also by making known his enemy, vice, which must be destroyed and his cumbersome, servant, passion, which must be mastered, by showing the generalities that contain it, and the specialities that are derived from it; lastly, by plain setting down how it extends itself out of the limits of a man's own little world, to the government of families, and maintaining of public societies?

The historian scarcely gives leisure to the moralist to say so much, but that he, loaded with old mouse-eaten records, authorizing himself for the most part upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay; having much ado to accord differing writers, and to pick truth out of partiality; better acquainted with a thousand years ago than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goes than how his own wit runs; curious for antiquities and inquisitive of novelties, a wonder to young folks and a tyrant in table-talk; denies, in a great chafe, that any man for teaching of virtue and virtuous actions is comparable to him "I am *testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis*, etc."<sup>3</sup> The philosopher," said he, "teaches a disputative virtue, but I do an active. His virtue is excellent in the dangerless Academy of Plato, but mine shows forth her honourable face in the battles of Marathon, Pharsalia, Poitiers, and Agincourt. He teaches virtue by certain abstract considerations, but I only bid you follow the footing of them that have gone before you. Old-aged experience goes beyond the fin-witted philosopher; but I give the experience of many ages. Lastly, if he make the song-book, I put the learner's hand to the lute; and if he be the guide, I am the light." Then would he allege you innumerable examples, conferring story by story, how much the wisest senators and princes have been directed by the credit of history, as Brutus, Alphonsus of Aragon (and who not, if need be?). At length the long line of their disputation makes a point in this, that the one gives the precept, and the other the example.

Now whom shall we find, since the question stands for the highest form in the school of learning, to be moderator? Truly, as me seems, the poet; and if

<sup>3</sup> "Witness of the times, light of truth, the life of memory the teacher of life, and the messenger of antiquity." Cicero, *De Oratore*, II. ix. 36



not a moderator, even the man that ought to carry the title from them both, and much more from all other serving sciences. Therefore compare we the poet with the historian and with the moral philosopher; and if he goes beyond them both, no other human skill can match him. For as for the divine, with all reverence it is ever to be excepted, not only for having his scope as far beyond any of these as eternity exceeds a moment, but even for passing each of these in themselves. And for the lawyer, though *Jus* be the daughter of Justice, and justice the chief of virtues, yet because he seeks to make men good rather *formidine poenae* than *virtutis amore*;<sup>4</sup> or, to say right, does not endeavour to make men good, but that their evil hurt not others; having no care, so he be a good citizen, how bad a man he be; therefore, as our wickedness makes him necessary, and necessity makes him honourable, so is he not in the deepest truth to stand in rank with these, who all endeavour to take naughtiness away, and plant goodness even in the secretest cabinet of our souls. And these four are all that any way deal in that consideration of men's manners, which being the supreme knowledge, they that best breed it deserve the best commendation.

The philosopher therefore and the historian are they which would win the goal, the one by precept, the other by example; but both, not having both, do both halt. For the philosopher, setting down with thorny argument the bare rule, is so hard of utterance and so misty to be conceived, that one that has no other guide but him shall wade in him till he be old, before he shall find sufficient cause to be honest. For his knowledge stands so upon the abstract and general, that happy is that man who may understand him, and more happy that can apply what he does understand. On the other side, the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draws no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine.

Now does the peerless poet perform both; for whatsoever the philosopher said should be done, he gave a perfect picture of it in some one by whom he presupposed it was done, so as he coupled the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture, I say; for he yields to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestows but a wordish description, which does neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other does. For as, in outward things, to a man that had never seen an elephant or a rhinoceros, who should tell him most exquisitely all their shapes, colour, bigness, and particular marks; or of a gorgeous palace, the architecture, with declaring the full beauties, might well make the hearer able to repeat, as it were by rote all he had heard, yet should never satisfy his inward conceit with being witness to itself of a true lively knowledge; but the same man, as soon as he might see those beasts well painted, or that house well in model, should straightways grow, without need of any description, to a

<sup>4</sup> Rather by fear of punishment than by love of virtue.

judicial comprehending of them: so no doubt the philosopher, with his learned definitions, be it of virtues or vices, matters of public policy or private government, replenishes the memory with many infallible grounds of wisdom, which notwithstanding lie dark before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy.

Tully takes much pains, and many times not without poetical helps, to make us know the force love of our country has in us. Let us but hear old Anchises speaking in the midst of Troy's flames, or see Ulysses, in the fulness of all Calypso's delights, bewail his absence from barren and beggarly Ithaca. Anger, the Stoics said, was a short madness. Let but Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheep and oxen, thinking them the army of Greeks, with their chieftains Agamemnon and Menelaus, and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger, than finding in the schoolmen his genus and difference. See whether wisdom and temperance in Ulysses and Diomedes, valour in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Euryalus, even to an ignorant man carry not an apparent shining. And, contrarily, the remorse of conscience in Oedipus; the soon-repenting pride of Agamemnon; the self-devouring cruelty in his father Atreus; the violence of ambition in the two Theban brothers; the sour sweetness of revenge in Medea; and, to fall lower, the Terentian Gnatho and our Chaucer's Pandar, so expressed that we now use their names to signify their own natural states laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them.

But even in the most excellent determination of goodness, what philosopher's counsel can so readily direct a prince, as the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon? Or a virtuous man in all fortunes, as Aeneas in Virgil? Or a whole commonwealth, as the way of Sir Thomas More's Utopia? I say the way, because where Sir Thomas More erred, it was the fault of the man, and not of the poet; for that way of patterning a commonwealth was most absolute, though he, perchance, had not so absolutely performed it. For the question is, whether the feigned image of poesy, or the regular instruction of philosophy, has the more force in teaching. Wherein if the philosophers have more rightly showed themselves philosophers than the poets have attained to the high top of their profession, (as in truth,

*Medicibus esse poetis*

*Non Dii, non homines, non concessere columnae),<sup>5</sup>*

it is, I say again, not the fault of the art, but that by few men that art can be accomplished.

Certainly, even our Saviour Christ could as well have given the moral commonplaces of uncharitableness and humbleness as the divine narration of Dives and Lazarus; or of disobedience and mercy, as that heavenly discourse of the lost child and the gracious father; but that his through-searching

<sup>5</sup> Neither men nor gods, nor even the tablets (of the booksellers) condone mediocrity in poets. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 372-3 (inexactly quoted).

wisdom knew the estate of Dives burning in hell, and of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, would more constantly, as it were, inhabit both the memory and judgement. Truly, for myself, meseems I see before mine eyes the lost child's disdainful prodigality turned to envy a swine's dinner ; which by the learned divines are thought not historical acts, but instructing parables.

For conclusion, I say the philosopher teaches, but he teaches obscurely, so as the learned only can understand him ; that is to say, he teaches them that are already taught. But the poet is the food for the tenderest stomachs ; the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher. Whereof Aesop's tales give good proof ; whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from those dumb speakers.

But now may it be alleged that if this imagining of matters be so fit for the imagination, then must the historian needs surpass, who brings you images of true matters, such as indeed were done, and not such as fantastically or falsely may be suggested to have been done. Truly, Aristotle himself, in his Discourse of Poesy, plainly determines this question, saying that poetry is *philosophoteron* and *spoudaioteron*, that is to say, it is more philosophical and more studiously serious than history. His reason is, because poesy deals with *katholou*, that is to say with the universal consideration, and the history with *kath' hekaston*, the particular. "Now," said he, "the universal weighs what is fit to be said or done, either in likelihood or necessity, which the poesy considers in his imposed names ; and the particular only marks whether Alcibiades did, or suffered, this or that" : thus far Aristotle. Which reason of his, as all his, is most full of reason.

For, indeed, if the question were whether it were better to have a particular act truly or falsely set down, there is no doubt which is to be chosen, no more than whether you had rather have Vespasian's picture right as he was, or, at the painter's pleasure, nothing resembling. But if the question be for your own use and learning, whether it be better to have it set down as it should be or as it was, then certainly is more doctrinable the feigned Cyrus of Xenophon than the true Cyrus in Justin ; and the feigned Aeneas in Virgil than the right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius ; as to a lady that desired to fashion her countenance to the best grace, a painter should more benefit her to portrait a most sweet face, writing Canidia upon it, than to paint Canidia as she was, who, Horace swore, was fouled and ill-favoured.

If the poet do his part aright, he will show you in Tantalus, Atreus, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned ; in Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses, each thing to be followed. Where the historian, bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberal (without he will be poetical), of a perfect pattern, but, as in Alexander, or Scipio himself, show doings, some to be liked, some to be disliked ; and then how will you discern what to follow, but by your own discretion, which you had without reading Quintus Curtius ? And whereas a man may say, though in universal consideration of doctrine the poet prevails, yet that the history, in his saying such a thing was done, does warrant a man

more in that he shall follow, the answer is manifest: that if he stand upon that *was*, as if he should argue, because it rained yesterday therefore it should rain today, then indeed it has some advantage to a gross conceit. But if he know an example only informs a conjectured likelihood, and so go by reason, the poet does so far exceed him as he is to frame his example to that which is most reasonable, be it in war-like, politic, or private matters; where the historian in his bare *was* has many times that which we call fortune to overrule the best wisdom. Many times he must tell events whereof he can yield no cause; or if he do, it must be poetically.

For, that a feigned example has as much force to teach as a true example (for as for to move, it is clear, since the feigned may be tuned to the highest key of passion), let us take one example wherein a poet and a historian do concur. Herodotus and Justin do both testify that Zopyrus, king Darius' faithful servant, seeing his master long resisted by the rebellious Babylonians, feigned himself in extreme disgrace of his king; for verifying of which he caused his own nose and ears to be cut off, and so flying to the Babylonians, was received, and for his known valour so far credited, that he did find means to deliver them over to Darius. Much like matter does Livy record of Tarquinius and his son. Xenophon excellently feigned such another stratagem, performed by Abradates in Cyprus' behalf. Now would I fain know, if occasion be presented unto you to serve your prince by such an honest dissimulation, why do you not as well learn it of Xenophon's fiction as of the other's verity? And, truly, so much the better, as you shall save your nose by the bargain; for Abradates did not counterfeit so far.

So, then, the best of the historian is subject to the poet; for whatsoever action or faction, whatsoever counsel, policy, or war-stratagem the historian is bound to recite, that may the poet, if he list, with his imitation make his own, beautifying it both for further teaching and more delighting, as it pleases him; having all, from Dante's Heaven to his Hell, under the authority of his pen. Which if I be asked what poets have done so? As I might well name some, yet say I, and say again, I speak of the art, and not of the artificer.

Now, to that which commonly is attributed to the praise of histories, in respect of the notable learning is gotten by marking the success, as though therein a man should see virtue exalted and vice punished, truly that commendation is peculiar to poetry and far off from history. For, indeed, poetry ever sets virtue so out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamoured of her. Well may you see Ulysses in a storm, and in other hard plights; but they are but exercises of patience and magnanimity, to make them shine the more in the near following prosperity. And, of the contrary part, if evil men come to the stage, they ever go out, as the tragedy writer answered to one that misliked the show of such persons so manacled, as they little animate folks to follow them. But the historian, being captived to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and an encouragement to unbridled wickedness. For see we

not valiant Miltiades rot in his fetters? The just Phocion and the accomplished Socrates put to death like traitors? The cruel Severus live prosperously? The excellent Severus miserably murdered? Sylla and Marius dying in their beds? Pompey and Cicero slain then, when they would have thought exile a happiness? See we not virtuous Cato driven to kill himself, and rebel Caesar so advanced that his name yet, after sixteen hundred years, lasted in the highest honour? And mark but even Caesar's own words of the forenamed Sylla (who in that only did honestly, to put down his dishonest tyranny), *litteras nescivit*:<sup>6</sup> as if want of learning caused him to do well. He meant it not by poetry, which, not content with earthly plagues, devises new punishments in hell for tyrants; nor yet by philosophy, which teaches *occidendos esse*<sup>7</sup> but, no doubt, by skill in history, for that indeed can afford you Cypselus, Periander, Phalaris Dionysius, and I know not how many more of the same kennel, that speed well enough in their abominable injustice or usurpation.

I conclude, therefore, that he excells history, not only in furnishing the mind with knowledge, but in setting it forward to that which deserves to be called and accounted good; which setting forward, and moving to well-doing, indeed sets the laurel crown upon the poet as victorious, not only of the historian, but over the philosopher, howsoever in teaching it may be questionable. For suppose it be granted (that which I suppose with great reason may be denied), that the philosopher, in respect of his methodical proceeding, does teach more perfectly than the poet, yet do I think that no man is so much *philophilosophos*<sup>8</sup> as to compare the philosopher in moving with the poet. And that moving is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appear, that it is well nigh both the cause and the effect of teaching; for who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught? And what so much good does that teaching bring forth (I speak still of moral doctrine), as that it moves one to do that which it does teach? For, as Aristotle says, it is not *gnosis* but *praxis*<sup>9</sup> must be the fruit; and how *praxis* can be, without being moved to practise, it is no hard matter to consider. The philosopher shows you the way, he informs you of the particularities, as well of the tediousness of the way, as of the pleasant lodging you shall have when your journey is ended, as of the many by-turnings that may divert you from your way; but this is to no man but to him that will read him, and read him with attentive, studious painfulness; which constant desire whosoever has in him, has already passed half the hardness of the way, and therefore is beholding to the philosopher but for the other half. Nay, truly, learned men have learnedly thought, that where once reason has so much overmastered passion as that the mind has a free desire to do well, the inward light each mind has in itself is as good as a philosopher's book; since in nature we know it is well to do well, and what is well and what is evil, although not in the words of art which philosophers

<sup>6</sup> He was ignorant of letters.

<sup>7</sup> That they are to be slain (Cicero, *De Officiis*).

<sup>8</sup> A lover of the philosopher.

<sup>9</sup> Not theory but practice.

bestow upon us; for out of natural conceit the philosophers drew it. But to be moved to do that which we know, or to be moved with desire to know, *hoc opus, hic labor est.*<sup>10</sup>

Now therein of all sciences (I speak still of human, and according to the human conceit), is our poet the monarch. For he does not only show the way, but gives so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it. Nay, he does, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the very first give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste you may long to pass further. He begins not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness. But he comes to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchancing skill of music; and with a tale, forsooth, he comes unto you, with a tale which holds children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner; and, pretending no more, does intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue: even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things, by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste—which, if one should begin to tell them the nature of the aloes of rhubarb they should receive, would sooner take their physic at their ears than at their mouth. So is it in men (most of which are childish in the best things, till they be cradled in their graves), glad they will be to hear the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas; and, hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice; which, if they had been barely—that is to say philosophically—set out, they would swear they be brought to school again.

That imitation whereof poetry is, has the most conveniency to nature of all other, insomuch that, as Aristotle says, those things which in themselves are horrible, as cruel battles, unnatural monsters, are made in poetical imitation delightful. Truly, I have known men, that even with reading *Amadis de Gaule* (which, God Knows, wants much of a perfect poesy), have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality, and especially courage. Who reads Aeneas carrying old Anchises on his back, that wishes not it were his fortune to perform so excellent an act? Whom do not those words of Turnus move, the tale of Turnus having planted his image in the imagination?

*Fugientem haec terra videbit?*

*Usque adeone mori miserum est?*<sup>11</sup>

Where the philosophers, as they scorn to delight, so must they be content little to move, saving wrangling whether virtue be the chief or the only good, whether the contemplative or the active life do excel, which Plato and

<sup>10</sup> This is the difficulty, this the toil. Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI. 129.

<sup>11</sup> Shall this land see me a fugitive? Is it, after all, so pitiful a thing to die? Virgil, *Aeneid*, xii, 645–6.

Boethius well knew, and therefore made Mistress Philosophy very often borrow the masking raiment of poesy. For even those hard-hearted evil men who think virtue a school-name, and know no other good but *indulgere genio*,<sup>12</sup> and therefore despise the austere admonitions of the philosopher, and feel not the inward reason they stand upon, yet will be content to be delighted, which is all the good-fellow poet seems to promise; and so steal to see the form of goodness (which seen, they cannot but love) ere themselves be aware, as if they took a medicine of cherries.

Infinite proofs of the strange effects of this poetical invention might be alleged; only two shall serve, which are so often remembered as I think all men know them. The one of Menenius Agrippa, who, when the whole people of Rome had resolutely divided themselves from the senate, with apparent show of utter ruin, though he were, for that time, an excellent orator, came not among them upon trust either of figurative speeches or cunning insinuations, and much less with far-fetched maxims of philosophy, which (especially if they were Platonic), they must have learned geometry before they could well have conceived; but, forsooth, he behaves himself like a homely and familiar poet. He tells them a tale, that there was a time when all the parts of the body made a mutinous conspiracy against the belly, which they thought devoured the fruits of each other's labour; they concluded they would let so unprofitable a spender starve. In the end, to be short—for the tale is notorious, and as notorious that it was a tale—with punishing the belly they plagued themselves. This, applied by him, wrought such effect in the people, as I never read that ever words brought forth but then so sudden and so good an alteration; for upon reasonable conditions a perfect reconciliation ensued.

The other is of Nathan the prophet, who, when the holy David had so far forsaken God as to confirm adultery with murder, when he was to do the tenderest office of a friend, in laying his own shame before his eyes (sent by God to call again so chosen a servant), how does he it but by telling of a man whose beloved lamb was ungratefully taken from his bosom? The application most divinely true, but the discourse itself feigned; which made David (I speak of the second and instrumental cause) as in a glass to see his own filthiness, as that heavenly Psalm of Mercy well testifies.

By these, therefore, examples and reasons, I think it may be manifest that the poet, with that same hand of delight, does draw the mind more effectually than any other art does. And so a conclusion not unfitly ensues: that as virtue is the most excellent resting-place for all worldly learning to make his end of, so poetry, being the most familiar to teach it, and most princely to move towards it, in the most excellent work is the most excellent workman.

But I am content not only to decipher him by his works (although works in commendation or dispraise must ever hold a high authority), but more narrowly will examine his parts; so that, as in a man, though altogether may

<sup>12</sup> To indulge our desires.

carry a presence full of majesty and beauty, perchance in some one defectious piece we may find a blemish.

Now in his parts, kinds, or species (as you list to term them), it is to be noted that some poesies have coupled together two or three kinds, as tragical and comical, whereupon is risen the tragi-comical; some, in the like manner, have mingled prose and verse, as Sannazzaro and Boethius; some have mingled matters heroical and pastoral; but that comes all to one in this question, for, if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful. Therefore, perchance forgetting some, and leaving some as needless to be remembered, it shall not be amiss in a word to cite the special kinds, to see what faults may be found in the right use of them.

Is it then the pastoral poem which is misliked?—for perchance where the hedge is lowest they will soonest leap over. Is the poor pipe disdained, which sometimes out of Meliboeus' mouth can show the misery of people under hard lords and ravening soldiers, and again, by Tityrus, what blessedness is derived to them that lie lowest from the goodness of them that sit highest? Sometimes, under the pretty tales of wolves and sheep, can include the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience; sometimes show that contention for trifles can get but a trifling victory; where perchance a man may see that even Alexander and Darius, when they strave who should be cock of this world's dunghill, the benefit they got was that the after-livers may say:

*Haec memini et victum frustra contendere Thyrsin;  
Ex illo Corydon, Corydon est tempore nobis.*<sup>13</sup>

Or is it the lamenting elegiac, which in a kind heart would move rather pity than blame; who bewails, with the great philosopher Heraclitus, the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world; who surely is to be praised, either for compassionate accompanying just causes of lamentation, or for rightly painring out how weak be the passions of woefulness?

Is it the bitter but wholesome iambic, who rubs the galled mind, in making shame the trumpet of villainy with bold and open crying out against naughtiness?

Or the satiric? Who

*Omne vaser vitium ridenti tangit amico;*<sup>14</sup>

who sportingly never leaves till he makes a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed to laugh at himself, which he cannot avoid without avoiding the folly; who, while *circum praecordia ludit*,<sup>15</sup> gives us to feel how many headaches a passionate life brings us to—how, when all is done,

<sup>13</sup> These verses I remember and that Thyrsis vanquished, contested in vain. Henceforth it is Corydon, Corydon for us. Virgil, *Eclogue*, vii, 69–70.

<sup>14</sup> Shrewdly touches every fault of his laughing friend. Persius, *Satire*, i. 116–7 (adapted).

<sup>15</sup> He plays about the strings of the heart. From the same passage as 1.



*Est Ulubris, animus ut nos non deficit aequus.*<sup>16</sup>

No, perchance it is the comic; whom naughty play-makers and stage-keepers have justly made odious. The argument of abuse I will answer after. Only thus much now is to be said, that the comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which he represents in the most ridiculous and scornful sort that may be, so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one. Now, as in geometry the oblique must be known as well as the right and in arithmetic the odd as well as the even; so in the actions of our life who sees not the filthiness of evil, wants a great foil to perceive the beauty of virtue. This does the comedy handle so, in our private and domestical matters, as with hearing it we get, as it were, an experience what is to be looked for a niggardly Deme, of a crafty Davus, of a flattering Gnatho, of a vain-glorious Thraso; and not only to know what effects are to be expected, but to know who be such, by the signifying badge given them by the comedian. And little reason has any man to say that men learn evil by seeing it so set out, since, as I said before, there is no man living, but by the force truth has in nature, no sooner sees these men play their parts, but wishes them *in pistrinum*,<sup>17</sup> although perchance the sack of his own faults lie so behind his back, that he sees not himself to dance the same measure—whereto yet nothing can more open his eyes than to find his own actions contemptibly set forth.

So that the right use of comedy will, I think, by nobody be blamed, and much less of the high and excellent tragedy, that opens the greatest wounds, and shows forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that makes kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours; that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration teaches the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded; that makes us know:

*Qui sceptru saevus duro imperio regit,  
Timet timentes, metus in auctorem redit.*<sup>18</sup>

But how much it can move, Plutarch yields a notable testimony of the abominable tyrant Alexander Phraeus; from whose eyes a tragedy, well made and represented, drew abundance of tears, who without all pity had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his own blood; so as he that was not ashamed to make matters for tragedies, yet could not resist the sweet violence of a tragedy. And if it wrought no further good in him, it was that he, in despite of himself, withdrew himself from hearkening to that which might mollify his hardened heart. But it is not the tragedy they do dislike, for it were too absurd to cast out so excellent a representation of whatsoever is most worthy to be learned.

<sup>16</sup> (Even here) at Ulubrae is it (that we seek) if we lack not serenity of soul. Horace, *Epistles*, I. xi, 30 (inexactly quoted).<sup>17</sup> In the pounding-mill.

<sup>18</sup> The cruel tyrant who wields his sceptre with harsh rule, he fears those who fear him, and terror recoils upon its author. Seneca, *Oedipus*, 705-6.

Is it the lyric that most displeases, who with his tuned lyre and well-accorded voice, gives praise, the reward of virtue, to virtuous acts; who gives moral precepts and natural problems; who sometimes raises up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God? Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness; I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpeter; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil appparelled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar? In Hungary I have seen it the manner at all feasts, and other such meeting, to have songs of their ancestors' valour, which that right soldier-like nation think the chiefest kindlers of brave courage. The incomparable Lacedaemonians did not only carry that kind of music ever with them to the field, but even at home, as much songs were made, so were they all content to be singers of them; when the lusty men were to tell what they did, the old men what they had done, and the young men what they would do. And where a man may say that Pindar many times praises highly victories of small moment, matters rather of sport than virtue; as it may be answered, it was the fault of the poet, and not of the poetry, so indeed the chief fault was in the time and custom of the Greeks, who set those toys at so high a price that Philip of Macedon reckoned a horse race won at Olympus among his three fearful felicities. But as the inimitable Pindar often did, so is that kind most capable and most fit to awake the thoughts from the sleep of idleness, to embrace honourable enterprises.

There rests the heroical, whose very name, I think, should daunt all back-biters. For by what conceit can a tongue be directed to speak evil of that which draws with it no less champions than Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas, Turnus, Tydeus, Rinaldo? Who does not only teach and move to a truth, but teaches and moves to the most high and excellent truth; who makes magnanimity and justice shine through all misty fearfulness and foggy desires; who, if the saying of Plato and Tully be true, that who could see virtue would be wonderfully ravished with the love of her beauty, this man sets her out to make her more lovely, in her holiday apparel, to the eye of any that will deign not to disdain until they understand. But if anything be already said in the defence of sweet poetry, all concurred to the maintaining the heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry. For, as the image of each action stirs and instructs the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflames the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy. Only let Aeneas be worn in the tablet of your memory, how he governs himself in the ruin of his country; in the preserving his old father, and carrying away his religious ceremonies; in obeying the gods' commandment to leave Dido, though not only all passionate kindness, but even the human consideration of virtuous gratefulness, would have craved other of him; how in storms, how in sports, how in war, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besieged, how besieging, how to strangers, how

to allies, how to enemies, how to his own; lastly, how in his inward self, and how in his outward government; and I think, in a mind not prejudiced with a prejudicating humour, he will be found in excellency fruitful. Yea, even as Horace said, *melius Chrysippo et Crantore*. But, truly, I imagine it falls out with these poet-whippers as with some good women who often are sick, but in faith they cannot tell where. So the name of poetry is odious to them, but neither his cause nor effects, neither the sum that contains him nor the particularities descending from him, give any fast handle to their carping dispraise.

Since, then, poetry is of all human learnings the most ancient and of most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings; since it is so universal that no learned nation does despise it, nor no barbarous nation is without it; since both Roman and Greek gave divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making, and that indeed that name of making is fit for him, considering that whereas other arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the poet only, brings his own stuff, and does not learn a conceit out of a matter, but makes matter for a conceit; since neither his description nor his end contains any evil, the thing described cannot be evil; since his effects be so good as to teach goodness, and delight the learners of it; since therein (namely, in moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges), he does not only far pass the historian, but for instructing is well nigh comparable to the philosopher, and for moving leaves him behind him; since the Holy Scriptures (wherein there is no uncleanness), have whole parts in it poetical, and that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers of it; since all kinds are not only in their united forms, but in their several dissections fully commendable; I think, and think I think rightly, the laurel crown appointed for triumphing captains does worthily, of all other learnings, honour the poet's triumph.

But because we have ears as well as tongues, and that the lightest reasons that may be will seem to weigh greatly, if nothing be put in the counter-balance, let us hear, and, as well as we can, ponder, what objections be made against this art, which may be worthy either of yielding or answering.

First, truly, I note not only in these *misomousoi*, poet-haters, but in all that kind of people who seek a praise by dispraising others, that they do prodigally spend a great many wandering words in quips and scoffs, carping and taunting at each thing which, by stirring the spleen, may stay the brain from a through-beholding the worthiness of the subject. Those kind of objections, as they are full of a very idle easiness (since there is nothing of so sacred a majesty but that an itching tongue may rub itself upon it), so deserve they no other answer, but, instead of laughing at the jest, to laugh at the jester. We know a playing wit can praise the discretion of an ass, the comfortableness of being in debt, and the jolly commodity of being sick of the plague. So of the contrary side, if we will turn Ovid's verse

*Ut lateat virtus proximitate mali,*

"that good lie hid in nearness of the evil," Agrippa will be as merry in showing the vanity of science, as Erasmus was in commending of folly; neither shall any man or matter escape some touch of these smiling railers. But for Erasmus and Agrippa, they had another foundation than the superficial part would promise. Marry, these other pleasant fault-finders, who will correct the verb before they understand the noun, and confute others' knowledge before they confirm their own, I would have them only remember that scoffing comes not of wisdom; so as the best title in true English they get with their merriments is to be called good fools, for so have our grave forefathers ever termed that humorous kind of jesters.

But that which gives greatest scope to their scorning humours is rhyming and versing. It is already said (and as I think truly said), it is not rhyming and versing that make poesy. One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry. But yet presuppose it were inseparable (as indeed it seems Scaliger judges), truly it were an inseparable commendation. For if *oratio* next to *ratio*, speech next to reason, be the greatest gift bestowed upon mortality, that cannot be praiseless which does most policy that blessing of speech; which considers each word, not only (as a man may say), by his forcible quality, but by his best-measured quantity; carrying even in themselves a harmony, without, perchance, number, measure, order, proportion be in our time grown odious.

But lay aside the just praise it has by being the only fit speech for music (music, I say, the most divine striker of the senses), thus much is undoubtedly true, that if reading be foolish without remembering, memory being the only treasurer of knowledge, those words which are fittest for memory, are likewise most convenient for knowledge. Now that verse far exceeds prose in the knitting up of the memory, the reason is manifest; the words (besides their delight, which has a great affinity to memory), being so set, as one cannot be lost but the whole work fails; which, accusing itself, calls the remembrance back to itself, and so most strongly confirms it. Besides, one word so, as it were, begetting another, as, be it in rhyme or measured verse, by the former a man shall have a near guess to the follower. Lastly, even they that have taught the art of memory have showed nothing so apt for it as a certain room divided into many places, well and thoroughly known; now that has the verse in effect perfectly, every word having his natural seat, which seat must needs make the word remembered. But what needs more in a thing so known to all men? Who is it that ever was a scholar that does not carry away some verses of Virgil, Horace, or Cato, which in his youth he learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourly lessons? As:

*Percontatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est.*<sup>19</sup>  
*Dum sibi quiesque placet, credula turba sumus.*<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Flee the inquisitive man, for he is likewise a babbler. Horace, *Epistles*, I. xviii. 69.

<sup>20</sup> While each one is pleasing himself, we are a credulous lot. Ovid, *Remed. Amor.* 686.

But the fitness it had for memory is notably proved by all delivery of arts, wherein, for the most part, from grammar to logic, mathematic, physic, and the rest, the rules chiefly necessary to be borne away are compiled in verses. So that verse being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it.

Now, then, go we to the most important imputations laid to the poor poets: for aught I can yet learn they are these.

First, that there being many other more fruitful knowledges, a man might better spend his time in them than in this.

Secondly, that it is the mother of lies.

Thirdly, that it is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires, with a siren's sweetness drawing the mind to the serpent's tail of sinful fancies, and herein especially comedies give the largest field to ear, as Chaucer said; how, both in other nations and in ours, before poets did soften us, we were full of courage, given to martial exercises, the pillars of manlike liberty, and not lulled asleep in shady idleness with poet's pastimes.

And, lastly and chiefly, they cry out with an open mouth, as if they had overshot Robin Hood, that Plato banished them out of his Commonwealth. Truly this is much, if there be much truth in it.

First, to the first; that a man might better spend his time is a reason indeed; but it does (as they say), but *petere principium*.<sup>21</sup> For if it be, as I affirm, that no learning is so good as that which teaches and moves to virtue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as poesy, then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose employed. And certainly, though a man should grant their first assumption, it should follow (me thinks), very unwillingly, that good is not good because better is better. But I still and utterly deny that there is sprung out of earth a more fruitful knowledge.

To the second, therefore, that they should be the principal liars, I answer paradoxically, but truly, I think truly, that of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar, and though he would, as a poet, can scarcely be a liar. The astronomer, with his cousin the geometrician can hardly escape when they take upon them to measure the height of the stars. How often, think you, do the physicians lie, when they aver things good for sicknesses, which afterwards send Charon a great number of souls drowned in a potion before they come to his ferry? And no less of the rest which take upon them to affirm. Now, for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lies. For, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false; so as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirming many things, can, in the cloudy knowledge of mankind, hardly escape from many lies. But the poet, as I said before, never affirms. The poet never makes any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writes. He cites not authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calls the sweet muses to inspire into

<sup>21</sup> Beg the question.

him a good invention; in truth, not labouring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be. And therefore, though he recount things not true, yet because he tells them not for true, he lies not; without we will say that Nathan lied in his speech, before alleged, to David; which, as a wicked man dare scarce say, so think I none so simple would say that Aesop lied in the tales of his beasts; for who thinks that Aesop wrote it for actually true, were well worthy to have his name chronicled among the beasts he writes of. What child is there that, coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, does believe that it is Thebes? If then a man can arrive, at that child's age, to know that the poet's persons and doings are but pictures what should be, and not stories what have been, they will never give the lie to things not affirmatively, but allegorically and figuratively written. And therefore, as in history looking for truth, they may go away full-fraught with falsehood, so in poesy looking for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention. But hereto is replied that the poets give names to men they write of, which argues a conceit of an actual truth, and so, not being true, proves a falsehood. And does the lawyer lie then, when, under the names of John a Stile, and John a Noakes, he puts his case? But that is easily answered. Their naming of men is but to make their picture the more lively, and not to build any history. Painting men, they cannot leave men nameless. We see we cannot play at chess but that we must give names to our chess-men; and yet, me thinks, he were a very partial champion of truth that would say we lied for giving a piece of wood the reverend title of a bishop. The poet names Cyrus and Aeneas no other way than to show what men of their fames, fortunes, and estates should do.

Their third is, how much it abuses men's wit, training it to wanton sinfulness and lustful love. For indeed that is the principal, if not the only, abuse I can hear alleged. They say the comedies rather teach than reprehend amorous conceits. They say the lyric is larded with passionate sonnets, the elegiac weeps the want of his mistress, and that even to the heroical Cupid has ambitiously climbed. Alas! Love, I would you could as well defend yourself as you can't offend others! I would those on whom you do attend could either put you away, or yield good reason why they keep you! But grant love of beauty to be a beastly fault (although it be very hard, since only man, and no beast has that gift to discern beauty); grant that lovely name of Love to deserve all hateful reproaches (although even some of my masters the philosophers spent a good deal of their lamp-oil in setting forth the excellency of it); grant, I say, whatsoever they will have granted that not only love, but lust, but vanity, but (if they list), scurrility, possesses many leaves of the poets' books; yet think I, when this is granted, they will find their sentence may with good manners put the last words foremost, and not say that poetry abuses man's wit, but that man's wit abuses poetry. For I will not deny, but that man's wit may make poesy (which should be *eikastike*, which some learned have defined, figuring forth good things) to be *phantastike*, which does

contrariwise infect the fancy with unworthy objects ; as the painter that should give to the eye either some excellent perspective, or some fine picture fit for building or fortification, or containing in it some notable example, as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, Judith killing Holofernes, David fighting with Goliath, may leave those, and please an ill-pleased eye with wanton shows of better-hidden matters. But what ! shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious ? Nay, truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming force, it can do more hurt than any other army of words, yet shall it be so far from concluding that the abuse should give reproach to the abused, that contrariwise it is a good reason, that whatsoever, being abused, does most harm, being rightly used—and upon the right use each thing receives his title—does most good. Do we not see the skill of physic (the best rampire to our often-assaulted bodies), being abused, teach poison, the most violent destroyer ? Does not knowledge of law, whose end is to even and right all things, being abused, grow the crooked fosterer of horrible injuries ? Does not (to go to the highest), God's word abused, breed heresy ; and his name abused, become blasphemy ? Truly a needle cannot do much hurt, and as truly, with leave of ladies be it spoken, it cannot do much good. With a sword you may kill your father, and with a sword you may defend your prince and country. So that, as in their calling poets the fathers of lies they say nothing, so in this their argument of abuse they prove the commendation.

They allege herewith, that before poets began to be in price our nation has set their hearts' delight upon action, and not upon imagination ; rather doing things worthy to be written, than writing things fit to be done. What that before-time was, I think scarcely Sphinx can tell ; since no memory is so ancient that has the precedence of poetry. And certain it is that, in our plainest homeliness, yet never was the Albion nation without poetry. Marry, this argument, though it be levelled against poetry, yet is it indeed a chainshot against all learning, or bookishness, as they commonly term it. Of such mind were certain Goths, of whom it is written that, having in the spoil of a famous city taken a fair library, one hangman (belike fit to execute the fruits of their wits), who had murdered a great number of bodies, would have set fire on it. "No," said another very gravely, "take heed what you do ; for while they are busy about these toys, we shall with more leisure conquer their countries." This, indeed, is the ordinary doctrine of ignorance, and many words sometimes I have heard spent in it ; but because this reason is generally against all learning, as well as poetry, or rather all learning but poetry ; because it were too large a digression to handle, or at least too superfluous (since it is manifest that all government of action is to be gotten by knowledge, and knowledge best by gathering many knowledges, which is reading) ; I only, with Horace, to him that is of that opinion

*Jubeo stultum esse libenter*;<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> I give him free leave to be foolish. Sat. I. i, 63 (adapted).

for as for poetry itself, it is the freest from this objection, for poetry is the companion of the camps. I dare undertake, Orlando Furioso or honest King Arthur will never displease a soldier; but the quiddity of *ens*, and *prima materia*, will hardly agree with a corselet. And therefore, as I said in the beginning, even Turks and Tartars are delighted with poets. Homer, a Greek, flourished before Greece flourished; and if to a slight conjecture a conjecture may be opposed, truly it may seem, that as by him their learned men took almost their first light of knowledge, so their active men received their first motions of courage. Only Alexander's example may serve, who by Plutarch is accounted of such virtue, that Fortune was not his guide but his footstool; whose acts speak for him, though Plutarch did not; indeed the phoenix of war-like princes. This Alexander left his schoolmaster, living Aristotle, behind him, but took dead Homer with him. He put the philosopher Callisthenes to death, for his seeming philosophical, indeed mutinous, stubbornness; but the chief thing he was ever heard to wish for was that Homer had been alive. He well found he received more bravery of mind by the pattern of Achilles, than by hearing the definition of fortitude. And therefore if Cato misliked Fulvius for carrying Ennius with him to the field, it may be answered that if Cato misliked it, the noble Fulvius liked it, or else he had not done it. For it was not the excellent Cato Uticensis (whose authority I would much more have revered); but it was the former, in truth a bitter punisher of faults, but else a man that had never well sacrificed to the Graces. He misliked and cried out upon all Greek learning; and yet, being fourscore years old, began to learn it, belike fearing that Plato understood not Latin. Indeed, the Roman laws allowed no person to be carried to the wars but he that was in the soldiers' roll. And therefore though Cato misliked his unmustered person, he misliked not his work. And if he had, Scipio Nasica, judged by common consent the best Roman, loved him. Both the other Scipio brothers, who had by their virtues no less surnames than of Asia and Africa, so loved him that they caused his body to be buried in their sepulchre. So as Cato his authority being but against his person, and that answered with so far greater than himself, is herein of no validity.

But now, indeed, my burden is great, that Plato his name is laid upon me, whom, I must confess, of all philosophers I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence; and with great reason, since of all philosophers he is the most poetical. Yet if he will defile the fountain out of which his flowing streams have proceeded, let us boldly examine with what reasons he did it.

First, truly, a man might maliciously object that Plato, being a philosopher, was a natural enemy of poets. For, indeed, after the philosophers had picked out of the sweet mysteries of poetry the right discerning true points of knowledge, they forthwith, putting it in method, and making a school-art of that which the poets did only teach by a divine delightfulness, beginning to spurn at their guides, like ungrateful prentices were not content to set up shops for themselves, but sought by all means to discredit their masters; which by the force of delight being barred them, the less they could overthrow them the



more they hated them. For, indeed, they found for Homer seven cities strave who should have him for their citizen; where many cities banished philosophers, as not fit members to live among them. For only repeating certain of Euripides' verses, many Athenians had their lives saved of the Syracusans when the Athenians themselves thought many philosophers unworthy to live. Certain poets as Simonides and Pindar, had so prevailed with Hiero the First, that of a tyrant they made him a just king; where Plato could do so little with Dionysius, that he himself of a philosopher was made a slave. But who should do thus, I confess, should requite the objections made against poets with like cavillations against philosophers; as likewise one should do that should bid one read Phaedrus or Symposium in Plato, or the Discourse of Love in Plutarch, and see whether any poet do authorize abominable filthiness, as they do.

Again, a man might ask out of what commonwealth Plato did banish them. In fact, thence where he himself allows community of women. So as belike this banishment grew not for effeminate wantonness, since little should poetical sonnets be hurtful when a man might have what woman he listed. But I honour philosophical instructions, and bless the wits which bred them, so as they be not abused, which is likewise stretched to poetry. Saint Paul himself, who yet, for the credit of poets, alleged twice two poets, and one of them by the name of a prophet, set a watchword upon philosophy—indeed upon the abuse. So does Plato upon the abuse, not upon poetry. Plato found fault that the poets of his time filled the world with wrong opinions of the gods, making light tales of that unspotted essence, and therefore would not have the youth depraved with such opinions. Herein may much be said; let this suffice: the poets did not induce such opinions, but did imitate those opinions already induced. For all the Greek stories can well testify that the very religion of that time stood upon many and many-fashioned gods; not taught so by the poets, but followed according to their nature of imitation. Who list may read in Plutarch the discourses of Isis and Osiris, of the cause why Oracles ceased, of the Divine Providence, and see whether the theology of that nation stood not upon such dreams, which the poets indeed superstitiously observed; and truly (since they had not the light of Christ), did much better in it than the philosophers, who, shaking off superstition, brought in atheism.

Plato therefore (whose authority I had much rather justly construe than unjustly resist), meant not in general of poets, in those words of which Julius Scaliger said, *Qua autoritate barbari quidam atque hispidi abuti velint ad poetas é republica exigendos*;<sup>23</sup> but only meant to drive out those wrong opinions of the Deity (whereof now, without further law, Christianity has taken away all the hurtful belief), perchance (as he thought), nourished by the then esteemed poets. And a man need go no further than to Plato himself

<sup>23</sup> And this authority certain uncouth and barbarous writers would like to misuse for the purpose of driving poets out of the republic. Scaliger, *Poetics*, 5, a. 1.

to know his meaning; who, in his dialogue called *Ion*, gives high and rightly divine commendation unto poetry. So as Plato, banishing the abuse, not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour unto it, shall be our patron and not our adversary. For, indeed, I had much rather (since truly I may do it), show their mistaking of Plato, under whose lion's skin they would make an ass-like braying against poesy, than go about to overthrow his authority; whom, the wiser a man is, the more just cause he shall find to have in admiration; especially since he attributes unto poesy more than myself do, namely to be a very inspiring of a divine force, far above man's wit as in the aforementioned dialogue is apparent.

Of the other side, who would show the honours have by the best sort of judgement granted them, a whole sea of examples would present themselves: Alexanders, Caesars, Scipios, all favourers of poets; Laelius, called the Roman Socrates, himself a poet, so as part of *Heautontimoroumenon* in Terence was supposed to be made by him. And even the Greek Socrates, whom Apollo confirmed to be the only wise man, is said to have spent part of his old time in putting Aesop's Fables into verses; and therefore full evil should it become his scholar, Plato, to put such words in his master's mouth against poets. But what needs more? Aristotle writes the *Art of Poesy*; and why, if it should not be written? Plutarch teaches the use to be gathered of them; and how, if they teach the use to be gathered of them; and how, if they should not be read? And who reads Plutarch's either history or philosophy, shall find he trims both their garments with guards of poesy. But I list not to defend poesy with the help of her underling historiography. Let it suffice that it is a fit soil for praise to dwell upon; and what dispraise may set upon it, is either easily overcome, or transformed into just commendation.

So that, since the excellences of it may be so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low-creeping objections so soon trodden down: it not being an art of lies, but of true doctrine; not of effeminateness, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit; not banished, but honoured by Plato; let us rather plant more laurels for to engarland our poets' heads (which honour of being laureate, as besides them only triumphant captains were, is a sufficient authority to show the price they ought to be held in), than suffer the ill-savoured breath of such wrong speakers once to blow upon the clear springs of poesy.

But since I have run so long a career in this matter, methinks, before I give my pen a full stop, it shall be but a little more lost time to inquire why England, the mother of excellent minds, should be grown so hard a step-mother to poets, who certainly in wit ought to pass all others, since all only proceed from their wit, being indeed makers of themselves, not takers of others. How can I but exclaim.

*Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso?*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "O Muse, tell me, for what injury to her good-head . . ." Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1. 12.

Sweet poesy ! that has anciently had kings, emperors, senators, great captains, such as, besides a thousand others, David Adrian, Sophocles, Germanicus, not only to favour poets, but to be poets ; and of our nearer times can present for her patrons a Robert, King of Sicily ; the great King Francis of France ; King James of Scotland ; such cardinals as Bembus and Bibbiena ; such famous preachers and teachers as Beza and Melancthon ; so learned philosophers as Fracastorius and Scaliger ; so great orators as Pontanus and Muretus ; so piercing wits as George Buchanan ; so grave counsellors as, besides many, but before all, that Hospital of France, than whom, I think, that realm never brought forth a more accomplished judgement more firmly built upon virtue ; I say these, with numbers of others, not only to read others' poesies but to poetize for others' reading. That poesy, thus embraced in all other places, should only find in our time a hard welcome in England, I think the very earth laments it, and therefore decks our soil with fewer laurels than it was accustomed. For heretofore poets have in England also flourished ; and, which is to be noted, even in those times when the trumpet of Mars did sound loudest. And now that an over-faint quietness should seem to strew the house for poets, they are almost in as good reputation as the mountebanks at Venice. Truly even that, as of the one side it gives great praise to poesy, which, like Venus (but to better purpose), has rather be troubled in the net with Mars, than enjoy the homely quiet of Vulcan ; so serves it for a piece of a reason why they are less grateful to idle England, which now can scarce endure the pain of a pen. Upon this necessarily follows, that base men with servile wits undertake it, who think it enough if they can be rewarded of the printer. And so as Epaminondas is said, with the honour of his virtue to have made an office, by his exercising it, which before was contemptible, to become highly respected ; so these men, no more but setting their names to it, by their own disgracefulness disgrace the most graceful poesy. For now, without any commission, they do post over the banks of Helicon, till they make the readers more weary than post-horses ; while, in the meantime, they,

*Quis meliore luto finxit praecordia Titan,*<sup>25</sup>

are better content to suppress the outflowing of their wit than, by publishing them, to be accounted knights of the same order.

But I that, before ever I dare aspire unto the dignity, am admitted into the company of the paper-blurrers, do find the very true cause of our wanting estimation is want of desert, taking upon us to be poets in despite of Pallas. Now wherein we want desert were a thankworthy labour to express ; but if I knew, I should have mended myself. But I, as I never desired the title, so have I neglected the means to come by it ; only, overmastered by some thoughts, I yielded an inky tribute unto them. Marry, they that delight in poesy itself should seek to know why they do and how they do ; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason, if they be inclinable unto it. For

<sup>25</sup> Whose hearts the Titan moulded of a nobler clay. Juvenal, xiv. 34-5 (adapted).

poesy must not be drawn by the ears, it must be gently led, or rather it must lead; which was partly the cause that made the ancient learned affirm it was a divine gift, and no human skill, since all other knowledges lie ready for any that has strength of wit; a poet no industry can make if his own genius be not carried unto it. And therefore is it an old proverb: *Orator fit, poeta nascitur*.<sup>26</sup> Yet confess I always that, as the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest-flying wit have a Daedalus to guide him. That Daedalus, they say, both in this and in other, has three wings to bear itself up into the air of due commendation: that is, art, imitation, and exercise. But these, neither artificial rules nor imitative patterns, we much cumber ourselves withal. Exercise indeed we do, but that very fore-backwardly, for where we should exercise to know, we exercise as having known; and so is our brain delivered of much matter which never was begotten by knowledge. For, there being two principal parts, matter to be expressed by words, and words to express the matter, in neither we use art or imitation rightly. Our matter is *quodlibet*<sup>27</sup> indeed, though wrongly performing Ovid's verse,

*Quicquid conabar dicere, versus erat*;<sup>28</sup>

never marshalling it into any assured rank, that almost the readers cannot tell where to find themselves.

Chaucer, undoubtedly, did excellently in his *Troylus and Cressid*; of whom, truly, I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumbly after him. Yet had he great wants, fit to be forgiven in so reverend antiquity. I account the *Mirroure of Magistratès* meetly furnished of beautiful parts; and in the Earl of Surrey's *Lyricks* many things tasting of a noble birth, and worthy of a noble mind. The *Sheapheard's Kalender* has much poetry in his eclogues, indeed worthy the reading, if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style to an old rustic language I dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sannazzaro in Italian did affect it. Besides these, I do not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed, that have poetical sinews in them; for proof whereof, let but most of the verses be put in prose, and then ask the meaning, and it will be found that one verse did but beget another, without ordering at the first what should be at the last; which becomes a confused mass of words, with a tinkling sound of rime, barely accompanied with reason.

Our tragedies and comedies not without cause cried out against, observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful poetry: excepting *Gorboduck* (again I say of those that I have seen), which notwithstanding as it is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality, which it does most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of poesy; yet in truth it is very defectious in the

<sup>26</sup> The orator is made, the poet born.

<sup>27</sup> What you please.

<sup>28</sup> Whatever I tried to say became verse. Ovid, *Tristia*, IV. x, 26.

circumstances; which grieves me, because it might not remain as an exact model of all tragedies. For it is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions. For where the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days and many places inartificially imagined.

But if it be so in *Gorboduck*, how much more in all the rest? Where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Africa of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now you shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave. While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?

Now of time they are much more liberal. For ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love; after many traverses she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy, he is lost, grows a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child, and all this in two hours' space; which how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine, and art has taught, and all ancient examples justified, and at this day the ordinary players in Italy will not err in. Yet will some bring in an example of Eunuchus in Terence, that contains matter of two days, yet far short of twenty years. True it is, and so was it to be played in two days, and so fitted to the time it set forth. And though Plautus have in one place done amiss, let us hit with him, and not miss with him. But they will say, how then shall we set forth a story which contains both many places and many times? And do they not know that a tragedy is tied to the laws of poesy, and not of history; not bound to follow the story, but having liberty either to feign a quite new matter, or to frame the history to the most tragical conveniency? Again, many things may be told which cannot be showed, if they know the difference betwixt reporting and representing. As for example I may speak (though I am here), of Peru, and in speech digress from that to the description of Calicut; but in action I cannot represent it without Pacolet's horse. And so was the manner the ancients took, by some *Nuntius*<sup>29</sup> to recount things done in former time or other place.

Lastly, if they will represent an history, they must not (as Horace said), begin *ab ovo*<sup>30</sup> but they must come to the principal point of that one action which they will represent. By example this will be best expressed. I have a story of young Polydorus, delivered for safety's sake, with great riches, by his father Priamus to Polymnestor, King of Thrace, in the Trojan war time. He, after some years, hearing the overthrow of Priamus, for to make the treasure

<sup>29</sup> Messenger.

<sup>30</sup> From the egg. Horace, *Sat.* V, iii, 6.

his own murders the child; the body of the child is taken up; Hecuba, she, the same day, finds a sleight to be revenged most cruelly of the tyrant. Where now would one of our tragedy-writers begin, but with the delivery of the child? Then should he sail over into Thrace, and so spend I know not how many years, and travel numbers of places. But where does Euripides? Even with the finding of the body, leaving the rest to be told by the spirit of Polydorus. This needs no further to be enlarged; the dullest wit may conceive it.

But, besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carried it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestic matters, with neither decency nor discretion; so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained. I know Apuleius did somewhat so, but that is a thing recounted with space of time, not represented in one moment; and I know the ancients have one or two examples of tragi-comedies, as Plautus has *Amphitryo*. But, if we mark them well, we shall find that they never, or very daintily, match hornpipes and funerals. So falls it out that, having indeed no right comedy in that comical part of our tragedy, we have nothing but scurrility, unworthy of any chaste ears, or some extreme show of doltishness, indeed fit to lift up a loud laughter, and nothing else; where the whole tract of a comedy should be full of delight, as the tragedy should be still maintained in a well-raised admiration.

But our comedians think there is no delight without laughter, which is very wrong; for though laughter may come with delight, yet comes it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter; but well may one thing breed both together. Nay, rather in themselves they have, as it were, a kind of contrariety. For delight we scarcely do, but in things that have a conveniency to ourselves, or to the general nature; laughter almost ever comes of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight has a joy in it either permanent or present; laughter has only a scornful tickling. For example, we are ravished with delight to see a fair woman, and yet are far from being moved to laughter. We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight. We delight in good chances, we laugh at mischances. We delight to hear the happiness of our friends and country, at which he were worthy to be laughed at that would laugh. We shall, contrarily, laugh sometimes to find a matter quite mistaken and go down the hill against the bias, in the mouth of some such men, as for the respect of them one shall be heartily sorry, yet he cannot choose but laugh, and so is rather pained than delighted with laughter. Yet deny I not but that they may go well together. For as in Alexander's picture well set out we delight without laughter, and in twenty mad antics we laugh without delight; so in Hercules, painted, with his great beard and furious countenance, in woman's attire, spinning at Omphale's commandment, it breeds both delight and laughter; the representing of so strange a power in love procures delight, and the scornfulness of the action stirs laughter.

But I speak to this purpose, that all the end of the comical part be not upon such scornful matters as stir laughter only, but mixed with it that delightful teaching which is the end of poesy. And the great fault, even in that point of laughter, and forbidden plainly by Aristotle, is that they stir laughter in sinful things, which are rather execrable than ridiculous; or in miserable, which are rather to be pitied than scorned. For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched beggar or a beggarly clown, or, against law of hospitality, to jest at strangers because they speak not English as well as we do? What do we learn? Since it is certain:

*Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,  
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit.*<sup>31</sup>

But rather a busy loving courtier; a heartless threatening Thraso; self-wise-seeming schoolmaster; a wry-transformed traveller; these if we saw walk in stage-names, which we play naturally, therein were delightful laughter and teaching delightfulness, as in the other, the tragedies of Buchanan do justly bring forth a divine admiration.

But I have lavished out too many words of this play-matter. I do it, because, as they are excelling parts of poesy, so is there none so much used in England, and none can be more pitifully abused; which, like an unmannerly daughter, showing a bad education, causes her mother Poesy's honesty to be called in question.

Other sorts of poetry almost have we none, but that lyrical kind of songs and sonnets, which, Lord, if he gave us so good minds, how well it might be employed, and with how heavenly fruit both private and public, in singing the praises of the immortal beauty, the immortal goodness of that God who gives us hands to write, and wits to conceive!—of which we might well want words, but never matter: of which we could turn our eyes to nothing, but we should ever have newbudding occasions.

But truly, many of such writings as come under the banner of irresistible love, if I were a mistress would never persuade me they were in love; so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings (and so caught up certain swelling phrases, which hang together like a man which once told me the wind was at north-west and by south, because he would be sure to name winds enough), than that in truth they feel those passions; which easily, as I think, may be betrayed by that same forcibleness, or *energeia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer. But let this be a sufficient, though short note, that we miss the right use of the material point of poesy.

Now for the outside of it, which is words, or (as I may term it) diction, it is even well worse; so is that honey-flowing matron, Eloquence, apparelled, or rather disguised, in a courtesan-like painted affection: one time with so far-fetched words, they may seem monsters, but must seem strangers, to any poor

<sup>31</sup> Luckless poverty involves no greater hardship than this, that it makes a man ridiculous. Juvenal, *Sat.* iii, 152–3.

Englishman; another time with coursing of a letter, as if they were bound to follow the method of a dictionary; another time with figures and flowers extremely winter-starved.

But I would this fault were only peculiar to versifiers, and had not as large possession among prose-printers, and (which is to be marvelled), among many scholars, and (which is to be pitied), among some preachers. Truly I could wish—if at least I might be so bold to wish in a thing beyond the reach of my capacity—the diligent imitators of Tully and Demosthenes (most worthy to be imitated) did not so much keep Nizolian paper-books of their figures and phrases, as by attentive translation, as it were, devour them whole, and make them wholly theirs. For now they cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served to the table; like those Indians, not content to wear ear-rings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their nose and lips, because they will be sure to be fine. Tully, when he was to drive out Catiline as it were with a thunderbolt of eloquence, often used that figure of repetition, as *Vivit, Vivit? Immo in senatum venit*<sup>31a</sup> etc. Indeed inflamed with a well-grounded rage, he would have his words, as it were, double out of his mouth; and so do that artificially, which we see men in choler do naturally. And we, having noted the grace of those words, hale them in sometime to a familiar epistle, when it were too much choler to be cholerick. How well store of *similiter cadences* does sound with the gravity of the pulpit. I would but invoke Demosthenes' soul to tell, who with a rare daintiness uses them. Truly they have made me think of the sophister that with too much subtlety would prove two eggs three, and though he might be counted a sophister, had none for his labour. So these men bringing in such a kind of eloquence, well may they obtain an opinion of a seeming fineness, but persuade few, which should be the end of their fineness.

Now for similitudes, in certain printed discourses, I think all herbarists, all stories of beasts, fowls, and fishes are rifled up, that they may come in multitudes to wait upon any of our conceits, which certainly is as absurd a surfeit to the ears as is possible. For the force of a similitude not being to prove anything to a contrary disputer, but only to explain to a willing hearer; when that is done, the rest is a most tedious prattling, rather overswaying the memory from the purpose whereto they were applied, than any whit informing the judgement, already either satisfied or by similitudes not to be satisfied.

For my part, I do not doubt, when Antonius and Crassus, the great forefathers of Cicero in eloquence, the one (as Cicero testifies of them) pretended not to know art, the other not to set by it, because with a plain sensibleness they might win credit of popular ears, which credit is the nearest step to persuasion, which persuasion is the chief mark of oratory—I do not doubt, I say, but that they used these knacks very sparingly; which who does generally use any man may see does dance to his own music, and so be noted

<sup>31a</sup> He lives. Lives (do I say)? Nay, even comes into the senate. Cicero, *Cat.* 1, 2.



by the audience more careful to speak curiously than to speak truly. Undoubtedly (at least to my opinion undoubtedly), I have found in divers small-learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of learning; of which I can guess no other cause, but that the courtier following that which by practice he finds fittest to nature, therein though he know it not, does according to art, though not by art; where the other using art to show art and not to hide art (as in these cases he should do), flies from nature, and indeed abuses art.

But what! methinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory. But both have such an affinity in this wordish consideration, that I think this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding: which is not to take upon me to teach poets how they should do, but only, finding myself sick among the rest, to show some one or two spots of the common infection grown among the most part of writers; that, acknowledging ourselves somewhat awry, we may bend to the right use both of matter and manner; whereto our language gives us great occasion, being, indeed, capable of any excellent exercising of it.

I know some will say it is a mingled language. And why not so much the better, taking the best of both the other? Another will say it wants grammar. Nay, truly, it has that praise that it wants not grammar: for grammar it might have, but it needs it not; being so easy in itself, and so void of those cumbersome differences of cases, genders, moods, and tenses, which, I think, was a piece of the Tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother tongue. But for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the mind, which is the end of speech, that has it equally with any other tongue in the world; and is particularly happy in compositions of two or three words together—near the Greek, far beyond the Latin, which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a language.

Now of versifying there are two sorts, the one ancient, the other modern. The ancient marked the quantity of each syllable, and according to that framed his verse; the modern observing only number, with some regard of the accent, the chief life of it stands in that like sounding of the words, which we call rhyme. Whether of these be the more excellent would bear many speeches; the ancient no doubt more fit for music, both words and tune observing quantity; and more fit lively to express divers passions, by the low or lofty sound of the well-weighed syllable. The latter likewise with his rhyme strikes a certain music to the ear; and, in fine, since it does delight, though by another way, it obtains the same purpose; there being in either sweetness, and wanting in neither, majesty. Truly the English, before any other vulgar language I know, is fit for both sorts. For, for the ancient, the Italian is so full of vowels that it must ever be cumbered with elisions; the Dutch so, of the other side, with consonants, that they cannot yield the sweet sliding fit for a verse. The French in his whole language has not one word that has his accent in the last syllable saving two, called antepenultima, and little more has the Spanish; and therefore very gracelessly may they use dactyls.

The English is subject to none of these defects. Now for rhyme, though we do not observe quantity, yet we observe the accent very precisely, which other languages either cannot do, or will not do so absolutely. That caesura, or breathing-place in the midst of the verse, neither Italian nor Spanish have, the French and we never almost fail of.

Lastly, even the very rhyme itself the Italian cannot put in the last syllable, by the French named the masculine rhyme, but still in the next to the last, which the French call the female, or the next before that, which the Italians term *sdrucchiola*. The example of the former is *buono, suono*; of the *sdrucchiola* is *femina, semina*. The French, of the other side, has both the male as *bon, son*; and the female, as *plaise, laise*; but the *sdrucchiola* he has not. Where the English has all three, as *due, true*; *father, rather*; *motion, potion*, with much more which might be said, but that already I find the triflingness of this discourse is much too much enlarged.

So that since the ever praiseworthy poesy is full of virtue-breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning: since the blames laid against it are either false or feeble; since the cause why it is not esteemed in England is the fault of poet-apes, not poets; since lastly, our tongue is most fit to honour poesy, and to be honoured by poesy; I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the Nine Muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of poesy; no more to laugh at the name of poets, as though they were next inheritors of fools; no more to jest at the reverend title of "a rhymers"; but to believe, with Aristotle, that they were the ancient treasurers of the Grecians' divinity; to believe, with Bembo, that they were first bringers-in of all civility; to believe, with Scaliger, that no philosopher's precepts can sooner make you an honest man than the reading of Virgil; to believe, with Clauserus, the translator of Cornutus, that it pleased the Heavenly Deity by Hesiod and Homer, under the veil of fables, to give us all knowledge, logic, rhetoric, philosophy natural and moral, and *quid non*? To believe, with me, that there are many mysteries contained in poetry which of purpose were written darkly, lest by profane wits it should be abused; to believe, with Landino, that they are so beloved of the gods, that whatsoever they write proceeds of a divine fury; lastly, to believe themselves, when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses.

Thus doing, your name shall flourish in the printers' shops. Thus doing, you shall be of kind to many a poetical preface. Thus doing, you shall be most fair, most rich, most wise, most all; you shall dwell upon superlatives. Thus doing, though you be *libertino patre natus*,<sup>32</sup> you shall suddenly grow *Herculeæ proles*.<sup>33</sup>

*Si quid mea carmina possunt.*<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Born with a freedman for your father. Horace, *Sat.* I, vi. 6.

<sup>33</sup> A child of the house of Hercules.

<sup>34</sup> If aught my verses can do. Virgil, *Aeneid*, ix. 466.

Thus doing, your soul shall be placed with Dante's Beatrix or Virgil's Anchises.

But if—fie of such a but!—you be born so near the dullmaking cataract of Nilus, that you cannot hear the plant-like music of poetry; if you have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry, or rather, by a certain rustical disdain, will become such a mome as to be a *Momus* of poetry; then, though I will not wish unto you the ass's ears of Midas, nor to be driven by a poet's verses, as Bubonax was, to hang himself; nor to be rhymed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland; yet thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets: that while you live you live in love, and never get favour, for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth, for want of an epitaph.

# BEN JONSON

## FROM THE PREFACE TO *Sejanus: His Fall*

1605

### TO THE READERS

THE FOLLOWING voluntary labours of my friends, prefixed to my book have relieved me in much whereat, without them, I should necessarily have touched. Now I will only use three or four short and needful notes and so rest.

First, if it be objected that what I publish is no true poem in the strict laws of time, I confess it, as also in the want of a proper chorus, whose habit and moods are such and so difficult as not any whom I have seen since the ancients (no, not they who have most presently affected laws) have yet come in the way off. Nor is it needful, or almost possible, in these times, and to such auditors as commonly things are presented, to observe the old state and splendour of dramatic poems, with the preservation of any popular delight. But of this I shall take more seasonable cause to speak in my Observations upon Horace's Art of Poetry, which, the text translated, I intend shortly to publish. In the meantime, if in truth of argument, a dignity of persons, gravity and height of elocution, fulness and frequency of sentence, I have discharged the other offices of a tragic writer, let not the absence of these forms be imputed to me, wherein I shall give you occasion hereafter, and without my boast, to think I could better prescribe than omit the due use for want of a convenient knowledge.

The next is, lest in some nice nostril the *Quotations* might savour affected, I do let you know that I abhor nothing more, and have only done it to show my integrity in the *Story*, and save myself in those common torturers that bring all wit to the rack, whose noses are ever like swine spoiling and rooting up the Muses' Gardens, and their whole bodies working under earth to cast any, the least, hills upon virtue

### DEDICATORY EPISTLE OF *Volpone, or The Fox*

NEVER, MOST equal sisters, had any man a wit so presently excellent, as that it could raise itself, but there must come both matter, occasion, commenders, and favourers to it. If this be true, and that the fortune of all writers does daily prove it, it behoves the careful to provide well toward these accidents; and having acquired them, to preserve that part of reputation most tenderly, wherein the benefit of a friend is also defended. Hence is it, that I now render

myself grateful, and am studious to justify the bounty of your act. To which, though your mere authority were satisfying, yet it being an age wherein poetry and the professors of it hear so ill on all sides, there will reason be looked for in the subject. It is certain, nor can it with any forehead be opposed, that the too-much licence of poetasters in this time has much their mistress ; that everyday their manifold and manifest ignorance does stick unnatural reproaches upon her. But for their petulence, it were an act of the greatest injustice, either to let the learned suffer, or so divine a skill—which indeed should not be attempted with unclean hands—to fall under the least contempt. For if men will impartially, and not asquint, look toward the offices and function of a poet, they will easily conclude to themselves the impossibility of any man's being the good poet, without first being a good man. He that is said to be able to inform young men to all good disciplines, inflame grown men to all great virtues, keep old men in their best and supreme state, or as they decline to childhood, recover them to their first strength ; that comes forth the interpreter and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things divine no less than human, a master in manners ; and can alone, or with a few, effect the business of mankind. This, I take him, is no subject for pride and ignorance to exercise their railing rhetoric upon. But it will here be hastily answered, that the writers of these days are other things ; that not only their manners, but their natures, are inverted, and nothing remaining with them of the dignity of poet, but the abused name, which every scribe usurps ; that now especially in dramatic, or (as they term it) stage-poetry, nothing but ribaldry, profanation, blasphemy, all licence of offence to God, and man, is practised. I dare not deny a great part of this, and am sorry I dare not ; because in some men's abortive features (and would they had never boasted the light) it is over-true. But that all are embarked in this bold adventure for hell, is a most uncharitable thought, and uttered, a more malicious slander. For my particular, I can, from a most clear conscience, affirm, that I have ever trembled to think toward the least profaneness ; have loathed the use of such foul and unwashed bawdry, as is now made the food of the scene. And howsoever I cannot escape, from some, the imputation of sharpness, but that they will say I have taken a pride or lust to be bitter, and not my youngest infant but has come into the world with all this teeth ; I would ask of these supercilious politics, what nation, society, or general order, or state, I have provoked ? What public person ? Whether I have not, in all these, preserved their dignity, as mine own person, safe ? My WORKS are read, allowed (I speak of those that are entirely mine), look into them. What broad reproofs have I used ? Where have I been particular ? Where personal except to a mimic, cheater, baud, or buffoon, creatures, for their insolences, worthy to be taxed ? Or to which of these so pointedly, as he might not either ingeniously have confessed, or wisely dissembled his disease ? But it is not rumour can make men guilty, much less entitle me to other men's crimes. I know that nothing can be so innocently written or carried, but may be made obnoxious to construction ; marry whilst I bear mine innocence about me, I fear it not. Application is now grown a trade

with many ; and there are that profess to have a key for the deciphering of everything ; but let wise and noble persons take heed how they be too credulous, or give leave to these invading interpreters, to be over-familiar with their fames, who cunningly, and often, utter their own virulent malice under other men's simplest meanings. As for those that will, by faults which charity has raked up, or common honesty concealed, make themselves a name with the multitude, or, to draw their rude and beastly claps, care not whose living faces they entrench with their petulant styles ; may they do it without a rival, for me ! I choose rather to live graved in obscurity than share with them in so preposterous a fame. Nor can I blame the wishes of those grave and wiser patriots, who providing these licentious spirits may do in a state, desire rather to see fools, and devils, and those antique of barbarism retrieved, with all other ridiculous, and exploded follies, than behold the wounds of private men of princes, and nations. For, as Horace makes Trebatious speak, in these,

*Sibi quisque timet, quanquam est intactus, and odit.*

And men may justly impute such rages, if continued, to the writer, as his sports. The increase of which lust in liberty, together with the present trade of the stage, in all their miscellaneous Interludes, what learned or liberal soul does not already abhor ? Where nothing but the garbage of the time is uttered, and that with such impropriety of phrase, such plenty of solecisms, such dearth of sense, so bold prolepses, so racked metaphors, with brothelry able to violate the ear of pagan, and blasphemy to turn the blood of a Christian to water. I cannot but be serious in a cause of this nature, wherein my fame, and the reputations of diverse honest and learned are the question ; when a NAME, so full of authority, antiquity, and all great mark, is, through their insolence, become the lowest scorn of the age ; and those MEN subject to the petulence of every vernaculous orator, that were wont to be the care of kings, and happiest monarchs. This it is that has not only rapt me to present indignation, but made me studious, heretofore, and by all my actions, to stand off from them ; which may most appear in this my latest WORK, which you most learned ARBITRESSES, have seen, judged, and to my crown, approved, wherein I have laboured, for their instruction and amendment, to reduce, not only the ancient forms, but manners of the scene, the easiness, the propriety, the innocence, and last the doctrine, which is the principal end of POESY, to inform men in the best reason of living. And though my catastrophe may, in the strict rigour of comic law, meet with censure, as turning back to my promise ; I desire the learned and charitable critic to have so much faith in me, to think it was done off industry. For with what ease I could have varied it nearer his scale (but that I fear to boast my own faculty), I could here insert. But my special aim being to put the snaffle in their mouths that cry out, we never punish vice in our Interludes, etc., I took the more liberty ; though not without some lines of example of drawn even in the ancients themselves, the goings out of whose comedies are not always joyful, but oft-times the bawds, the servants, the rivals, yea, and the masters are mulcted ; and fitly, it being the office of a

comic-poet to imitate justice and instruct to life, as well as purity of language, or stir up gentle affections. To which, upon my next opportunity toward the examining and digesting of my notes, I shall speak more wealthily, and pay the world a debt.

In the meantime, most revered SISTERS, as I have cared to be thankful for your affections past, and here made the understanding acquainted with some ground of your favours; let me not despair their continuance, to the maturing of some worthier fruits, wherein, if my MUSES be true to me, I shall raise the despised head of POETRY again, and stripping her out of those rotten and base rags, wherewith the times have adulterated her form, restore her to her primitive habit, feature, and majesty, and render her worthy to be kissed of all the great and master-spirits of our world. As for the vile and slothful, who never affected an act worthy of celebration, or are so inward with their own vicious natures as they worthily fear her, and think it a high point of policy to keep her in contempt with their declamatory and windy invectives she shall out of just rage incite her servants (who are *Genus iritabile*) to spout ink in their faces, that shall eat farther than their marrow, into their fames; and not CINNAMUS the barber, with his art, shall be able to take out the brands; but they shall live, and be read, till the wretches die, as things worst deserving of themselves in chief, and then of all mankind . . .

## PREFACE TO *The Alchemist*

1612

### TO THE READER

IF YOU (beset) more, you are an understander, and then I trust you. If you are one that takes up, and but a pretender, beware at what hands you receive your commodity; for you were never more fair in the way to be cozened than in this age in poetry, especially in plays: wherein, now, the concupiscence of jigs and dukes so reign, as to run away from nature, and be afraid of her, is the only point of art that tickles the spectators. But how out of purpose and place do I name art? When the professors are grown so obstinate contemners of it, and presumers on their own naturals, as they are deriders of all diligence that way, and by simple mocking at the terms, when they understand not the things, think to get of wittily with their ignorance. Nay, they are esteemed the more learned and sufficient for this by the multitudes through their excellent vice of judgement. For they commend writers as they do fencers or wrestlers, who, if they come in robustuously and put for it with a great deal of violence, are received for the braver fellows: when many times their own rudeness is the cause of their disgrace, and a little touch of their adversary gives all that boisterous force the foil. I deny not but that these men, who always seek to do more than enough, may sometime happen on something that is good and

great ; but very seldom. And when it comes it does not recompense the rest of their ill. It sticks out perhaps, and is more eminent, because all is sordid and vile about it, as lights are more discerned in a thick darkness than a faint shadow. I speak not this out of a hope to do good on any man against his will ; for I know, if it were put to the question of theirs and mine, the worse would find more suffrages, because the most favour common errors. But I give thee this warning, that there is a great difference between those that (to gain the opinion of copy) utter all they can, however unfitly, and those that use election and a mean. For it is only the disease of the unskilful to think rude things greater than polished, or scattered more numerous than composed.

FROM *Timber, or Discoveries*

I DO HEAR them say often : some men are not witty ; because they are not everywhere witty ; than which nothing is more foolish. If an eye or a nose be an excellent part in the face, therefore be all eye or nose ? I think the eyebrow, the forehead, the cheek, chin, lip, or any part else, are as necessary, and natural in the place. But now nothing is good that is natural : right and natural language seem to have least of the wit in it ; that which is writhed and tortured, is counted the more exquisite. Cloth of bodkin, or tissue, must be embroidered ; as if no face were fair, that were not powdered, or painted ? No beauty to be had, but in wresting, and writhing our own tongue ? Nothing is fashionable, till it be deformed ; and this is to write like a gentleman. All must be as affected, and preposterous as our gallants' clothes, sweet bags, and night-dressings ; in which you would think our men lay in, like ladies . it is so curious.

*Nothing* in our age, I have observed, is more preposterous, than the *running judgements* upon *poetry*, and *poets* ; when we shall hear those things commended, and cried up for the best writings, which a man would scarce vouchsafe, to wrap any wholesome drug in ; he would never light his tobacco with them. And those men almost named for miracles, who yet are so vile, that if a man should go about, to examine, and correct them, he must make all they have done, but one blot. Their good is so entangled with their bad, as forcibly one must draw on the others death with it. A sponge dipped in ink will do all :

. . . *Comitetur punica librum*  
*Spongia* . . .

Et paulò post,

*Non possunt . . . multae, una litura potest.*

Yet their vices have not hurt them : nay a great many they have profited ; for they have been loved for nothing else. And this false opinion grows strong



against the best men : if once it take root with the *ignorant*. *Cestius*, in his time, was preferred to *Cicero* ; so far, as the ignorant dared : they learned him without book, and had him often in their mouths. But a man cannot imagine that thing so foolish, or rude, but will find and enjoy an admirer ; at least, a reader, or spectator. The puppets are seen now in despite of the players : Heath's epigrams, and Skuller's poems have their applause. There are never wanting, that dare prefer the worst preachers, the worst pleaders, the worst poets : not that the better have left to write, or speak better, but that they that hear them judge worse ; *Non illi pejus dicunt, sed hi corruptius judicant*. Nay, if it were put to the question of the water-rimers' works, against *Spencer's* ; I doubt not, but they would find more *suffrages* ; because the most favour common vices, out of a prerogative the vulgar have, to lose their judgements, and like that which is naught.

*Poetry*, in this latter age, has proved but a mean Mistress to such as have wholly addicted themselves to her, or given their names up to her family. They who have but saluted her on the by, and now and then tendered their visits, she has done much for, and advanced in the way of their own professions (both the *Law*, and the *Gospel*) beyond all they could have hoped, or done for themselves, without her favour. Wherein she does emulate the judicious, but preposterous bounty of the times *Grandes* : who accumulate all they can upon the parasite, or freshman in their friendship, but think an old client, or honest servant, bound by his place to write, and starve.

*Indeed*, the multitude commend writers, as they do fencers, or wrestlers ; who if they come in robustiously, and put for it with a deal of violence, are received for the *braver-fellows* : when many times their own rudeness is a cause of their disgrace ; and a slight touch of their adversary, gives all that boisterous force the foil. But in these things, the unskilful are naturally deceived, and judging wholly by the bulk, think rude things greater than polished ; and scattered more numerous, than composed : nor think this only to be true in the sordid multitude, but the neater sort of our *gallants* : for all are the multitude ; only they differ in clothes, not in judgement or understanding.

*I remember*, the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned), he never blotted out line. My answer has been, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted. And to justify mine own candour (for I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry), as much as any. He was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature : had an excellent phantasy ; brave notions, and gentle expressions ; wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometime it was necessary he should be stopped : *Sufflaminandus erat* ; as *Augustus* said of *Haterius*. His wit was in his own power ; would the rule of it had been so too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter : As when he said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him ; *Caesar, thou doest me*

*wrong*. He replied: Caesar did *never wrong, but with just cause*: and such like; which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices, with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised, than to be pardoned.

*In the difference of wits*, I have observed; there are many notes: and it is a little mystery to know them: to discern, what every nature, every disposition will bear: for, before we sow our land, we should plough it. There are no fewer forms of minds, than of bodies amongst us. The variety is incredible; and therefore we must search. Some are fit to make divines, some poets, some lawyers, some physicians; some to be sent to the plough, and trades.

There is no doctrine will do good, where nature is wanting. Some wits are swelling, and high; others low and still; some hot and fiery; others cold and dull: one must have a bridle, the other a spur.

There be some that are forward, and bold; and these will do every little thing easily: I mean, that is hard by, and next them; which they will utter, unretarded, without any shamefastness. These never perform much, but quickly. They are, what they are on the sudden; they show presently, like grains, that, scattered on the top of the ground, shoots up, but takes no root; has a yellow blade, but the ear empty. They are wits of good promise at first, but there is an *Ingeni-stitium*: they stand still at sixteen, they get no higher.

You have others, that labour only to ostentation; and are ever more busy about the colours, and surface of work, than in the matter, and foundation: for that is hid, the other is seen.

Others, that in composition are nothing, but what is rough, and broken: *Quae per salebras, altaq, saxa cadunt*. And if it would come gently, they trouble it of purpose. They would not have it run without rubs, as if that style were more strong and manly, that stroke the ear with a kind of unevenness. These men err not by chance, but knowingly, and willingly; they are like men that affect a fashion by themselves, have some singularity in a ruff, cloak, or hat-band; or their beards, specially cut to provoke beholders, and set a mark upon themselves. They would be reprehended, while they are looked on. And this vice, one that is in authority with the rest, loving, delivers over to them to be imitated: so that oft-times the faults which he fell into, the others seek for; this is the danger, when vice becomes a *precedent*.

Others there are, that have no composition at all; but a kind of tuning, and riming fall, in what they write. It runs and slides, and only makes a sound. "Women's-Poets" they are called: as you have "women's-Tailors."

They write a verse, as smooth, as soft, as cream;  
in which there is no torrent, nor scarce stream.

You may sound these wits, and find the depth of them, with your middle finger. They are *cream-bowl*, or but puddle deep.

*Some*, that turn over all books, and are equally searching in all papers, that write out of what they presently find or meet, without choice; by which means it happens, that what they have discredited, and impugned in one work, they have before, or after, extolled the same in another. Such are all the

*Essayists*, even their Master *Montaigne*. These, in all they write, confess still what books they have read last ; and therein their own folly, so much, that they bring it to the *stake raw*, and undigested : not that the place did need it neither ; but that they thought themselves furnished, and would vent it.

Some again, who (after they have got authority, or, which is less, opinion, by their writings, to have read much) dare presently to fain whole books, and authors, and lie safely. For that never was, will not easily be found ; not by the most *curious*.

And some, by a cunning protestation against all reading, and false venditation of their own naturals, think to divert the *sagacity* of their readers from themselves, and cool the scent of their own fox-like thefts ; when yet they are so rank, as a man may find whole pages together usurped from one author, their necessities compelling them to read for present use, which could not be in many books ; and so come forth more ridiculously, and palpably guilty, than those, who, because they cannot trace, they yet would slander their industry.

But the wretched are the obstinate contemnners of all helps, and arts : such as presuming on their own *Naturals* (which perhaps are excellent) dare deride all diligence, and seem to mock at the terms, when they understand not the things ; thinking that way to get off wittily, with their ignorance. These are imitated often by such, as are their peers in negligence, though they cannot be in nature : and they utter all they can think, with a kind of violence, and *indisposition* ; unexamined, without relation, either to person, place, or any fitness else ; and the more wilful, and stubborn, they are in it, the more learned they are esteem of the *multitude*, through their excellent vice of judgement : who think those things the stronger, that have no art : as if to break, were better than to open ; or to rent asunder, gentler than to loose.

*It cannot* but come to pass, that these men, who commonly seek to do more than enough, may sometimes happen on some thing that is good, and great ; but very seldom : and when it comes, it does not recompense the rest of their ill. For their jests, and their sentences (which they only, and ambitiously seek for) stick out, and are more eminent ; because all is sordid, and vile about them ; as lights are more discerned in a thick darkness, than a faint shadow. Now because they speak all they can (however unfitly) they are thought to have the greater copy ; where the learned use ever election and a mean ; they look back to what they intended at first, and make all an even, and porportioned body. The true artificer will not run away from nature, as he were afraid of her ; or depart from life, and the likeness of truth ; but speak to the capacity of his hearers. And though his language differ from the vulgar somewhat ; it shall not fly from all humanity, with the *Tamerlanes*, and *Tamer-Chams* of the late age, which had nothing in them but the scenical strutting, and furious vociferation, to warrant them to the ignorant gapers. He knows it is his only art, so to carry it, as none but artificers perceive it. In the meantime perhaps he is called barren, dull, lean, a poor writer (or by what contumelious word can come in their cheeks) by these men, who without labour, judgement, knowledge, or almost sense, are received, or preferred before him. He

gratulates them, and their fortune. Another age, or juster men, will acknowledge the virtues of his studies: his wisdom, in dividing: his subtilty, in arguing: with what strength he does inspire his readers; with what sweetness he strokes them: in inveighing, what sharpness; in jest, what urbanity he uses. How he does reign in men's affections; how invade, and break in upon them; and makes their minds like the thing he writes. Then in his elocution to behold, what word is proper: which has ornament: which height: what is beautifully translated: where figures are fit: which gentle, which strong to show the composition *manly*. And how he has avoided faint, obscure, obscene, sordid, humble, improper, or effeminate phrase; which is not only praised of the most, but commended (which is worse), especially for that it is naught.

*I know* no disease of the *soul*, but *ignorance*; not of the arts, and sciences, but of itself: yet relating to those, it is a pernicious *evil*: the darkener of man's life: the disturber of his *reason*, and common confounder of *truth*: with which a man goes groping in the dark, no otherwise, than if he were blind. Great understandings are most wracked and troubled with it: nay, sometimes they will rather choose to die, than not to know the things they study for. Think then what an evil it is; and what good the contrary.

*Knowledge* is the action of the *soul*; and is perfect without the senses, as having the seeds of all science, and *virtue* in itself; but not without the service of the *senses*: by those organs, the *soul works*: She is a perpetual agent, prompt and subtle; but often flexible, and erring; entangling herself like a silk-worm: but her *reason* is a weapon with two edges, and cuts through. In her indagations oft-times new scents put her by; and she takes in errors into her, by the same conduits she does truths

Ease, and relaxation, are profitable to all studies. The mind is like a bow, the stronger by being unbent. But the temper in spirits is all, when to command a man's wit; when to favour it. I have known a man vehement on both sides; that knew no mean, either to intermit his studies, or call upon them again. When he has set himself to writing, he would join night to day; press upon himself without release, not minding it, till he fainted: and when he left off, resolve himself into all sports, and looseness again; that it was almost a despair to draw him to his book: but once got to it, he grew stronger, and more earnest by the ease. His whole powers were renewed: he would work out of himself, what he desired; but with such excess, as his study could not be ruled; he knew not how to dispose his own abilities, or husband them, he was of that immoderate power against himself. Nor was he only a strong, but an absolute *speaker*, and *writer*: but his subtilty did not show itself; his judgement thought that a vice. For the ambush hurts more that is hid. He never forced his language, nor went out of the high-way of speaking; but for some great necessity, or apparent profit. For he denied figures to be invented for ornament, but for aid; and still thought it an extreme madness to bend, or wrest that which ought to be right.

It is no *wonder*, men's eminence appears but in their own way. *Virgil's* felicity left him in prose, as *Tullies* forsook him in verse. *Salust's* Orations are

read in the honour of story : yet the most eloquent Plato's speech, which he made for Socrates, is neither worthy of the patron or the persons defended. Nay, in the same kind of oratory, and where the matter is one, you shall have him that reasons strongly, open negligently : another that prepares well, not fit so well : and this happens, not only to brains, but to bodies. One can wrestle well ; another run well ; a third leap, or throw the bar ; a fourth lift, or stop a cart going : each has his way of strength. So in other creatures ; some dogs are for the deer : some for the wild boar : some are fox-hounds : some otter-hounds. Nor are all horses for the coach, or saddle ; some are for the cart, and panniers.

I have known many excellent men, that would speak suddenly, to the admiration of their hearers ; who upon study, and premeditation have been forsaken by their own wits ; and no way answered their fame. Their eloquence was greater, than their reading : and the things they uttered better than those they knew. Their fortune deserved better of them, than their care. For men of present spirits, and of greater wits, than study, do please more in the things they invent, than in those they bring. And I have heard some of them compelled to speak, out of necessity, that have so infinitely exceeded themselves, as it was better, both for them, and their auditory, that they were so surprised, not prepared. Nor was it safe then to cross them, for their adversary, their anger made them more eloquent. Yet these men I could not but love, and admire, that they returned to their studies. They left not diligence (as many do) when their rashness prospered. For diligence is a great aid, even to an indifferent wit ; when we are not contented with the examples of our own age, but would know the face of the former. Indeed, the more we confer with, the more we profit by, if the persons be chosen.

*One*, though he be excellent, and the chief, is not to be imitated alone. For never no imitator, ever grew up to his author ; likeness is always on this side truth : yet there happened, in my time, one noble *speaker*, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language (where he could spare, or pass by a jest), was nobly *ensorious*. No man ever spoke more neatly, more precisely, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech, but consisted of the own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded where he spoke ; and had his judges angry, and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him, was, lest he should make an end.

Cicero is said to be the only wit, that the people of Rome had equalled to their *empire*. *Ingenium par imperio*. We have had many and in their several ages (to take in but the former *Seculum*), Sir Thomas Moore, the elder Wyat ; Earl of Surrey ; Chaloner, Smith, Eliot, B. Gardiner, were for their times admirable : and the more, because they began eloquence with us. Sir Nico : Bacon, was singular, and almost alone, in the beginning of Queen *Elizabeth's* times. Sir Philip Sidney and Mr. Hooker (in different matter) grew great masters of wit, and language ; and in whom all vigour of invention, and

strength of judgement met. The Earl of Essex, noble and high ; and Sir Walter Raleigh, not to be contemned, either for judgement, or style. Sir Henry Savile grave, and truly lettered ; Sir Edwin Sandes, excellent in both : Lo : Egerton, the Chancellor, a grave, and great orator ; and best, when he was provoked But his learned, and able (though unfortunate) successor is he, who has filled up all numbers ; and performed that in our tongue, which may be compared, or preferred, either to insolent Greece, or haughty Rome. In short, within his view, and about his times, were all the wits born, that could honour a language, or help study. Now things daily fall : wits grow downward, and eloquence grows backward : so that he may be named, and stand as the mark, and ἀκμή of our language.

I have ever observed it, to have been the office of a wise patriot, among the greatest affairs of the state, to take care of the Commonwealth of Learning. For Schools, they are the Seminaries of State : and nothing is worthier the study of a Statesman, than that part of the Republic, which we call the advancement of Letters. Witness the care of Julius Caesar, who, in the heat of the civil war, wrote his books of *Analogy*, and dedicated them to Tully This made the late Lord S. Albans entitle his work, *Novum Organum*. Which though by the most of superficial men, who cannot get beyond the title of *Nominals*, it is not penetrated, nor understood, it really opened all defects of learning, whatsoever ; and is a book,

*Qui longum noto scriptori porriget ævum*

My conceit of his person was never increased toward him, by his place, or honours But I have, and do reverence him for the greatness, that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages In his adversity I ever prayed, that God would give him strength : for *Greatness* he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word, or syllable for him ; as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue ; but rather help to make it manifest.

\* \* \* \*

*Poetry*, and *picture*, are arts of a like nature ; and both are busy about imitation. It was excellently said of Plutarch, poetry was a speaking picture, and picture a mute poesy. For they both invent, fain, and devise many things, and accommodate all they invent to the use, and service of nature Yet of the two, the pen is more noble, than the pencil. For that can speak to the understanding ; the other, but to the sense. They both behold pleasure, and profit, as their common object ; but should abstain from all base pleasures, lest they should err from their end ; and while they seek to better men's minds, destroy their manners. They both are born *artificers*, not made Nature is more powerful in them than study

Whosoever loves not picture, is injurious to truth : and all the wisdom of poetry. Picture is the invention of heaven : the most ancient, and most akin to nature. It is itself a silent work : and always of one and the same habit : yet it does so enter, and penetrate the inmost affection (being done by an excellent artificer) as sometimes it overcomes the power of speech, and oratory. There are diverse graces in it ; so are there in the artificers. One excels in care, another in reason, a third in easiness, a fourth in nature and grace. Some have diligence, and comeliness : but they want majesty. They can express a human form in all the graces, sweetness, and elegance ; but they miss the authority. They can hit nothing but smooth cheeks ; they cannot express roughness, or gravity. Others aspire to truth so much, as they are rather lovers of likeness, than beauty : *Zeuxis*, and *Parrhasius*, are said to be contemporaries : the first, found out the reason of lights, and shadows in picture : the other, more subtly examined the lines.

In picture, light is required no less than shadow : so in style, height, as well as humbleness. But beware they be not too humble ; as Pliny pronounced of *Regulus* writings : you would think them written, not on a child, but by a child. Many, out of their own obscene apprehensions, refuse proper and fit words ; as *occupy*, *nature*, and the like ; so the curious industry in some of having all alike good, has come nearer a vice, than a virtue.

*Picture* took her faining from *poetry* : from *geometry* her rule, compass, lines, proportion, and the whole *symmetry*. *Parrhasium* was the first wan reputation, by adding *symmetry* to picture : he added subtilty to the countenance, elegancy to the hair, loveliness to the face ; and, by the public voice of all artificers, deserved honour in the outer lines. *Eupompus* gave it splendour by numbers, and other elegancies. From the *opticks* it drew reasons ; by which it considered, how things placed at distance, and a far off, should appear less : how above, or beneath the head, should deceive the eye, etc. So from thence it took shadows, recessor, light, and heightenings. From moral *Philosophy* it took the soul, the expression of senses, perturbations, manners, when they would paint an angry person, a proud, an inconstant, an ambitious, a brave, a magnanimous, a just, a merciful, a compassionate, an humble, a dejected, a base, and the like. They made all heightenings bright, all shadows dark, all swellings from a plane ; all solids from breaking. See where he complains of their painting *Chimoeraes*, by the vulgar unaptly called *grotesque* : saying, that men who were born truly to study, and emulate nature, did nothing but make monsters against nature ; which Horace so laughed at. The art *plastic* was moulding in clay, or potter's earth anciently. This is the parent of statuary : sculpture, graving and picture, cutting in brass, and marble, all serve under her. Socrates taught *Parrhasius*, and *Clito* (two noble statuaryes) first to express manners by their looks in imagery. *Polygnotus*, and *Aglaophon* were ancients. After them *Zeuxis*, who was the Law-giver to all painters, after *Parrhasius*. They were contemporaries, and lived both about *Philips's* time, the Father of *Alexander the Great*.

There lived in this latter age six famous painters in Italy: who were excellent, and emulous of the ancients: Raphael de Urbino, Michelangelo Buonarota, Titian, Antonie of Correggio, Sebastian of Venice, Iulio Romano, and Andrea Sartorio.

\* \* \* \*

*For a man to write well, there are required three necessities. To read the best authors, observe the best speakers: and much exercise of his own style. In style to consider, what ought to be written; and after what manner; he must first think, and excogitate his matter; then choose his words, and examine the weight of either. Then take care in placing, and ranking both matter, and words, that the composition be comely; and to do this with diligence, and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be laboured, and accurate: seek the best, and be not glad of the forward conceits, or first words, that offer themselves to us, but judge of what we invent; and order what we approve. Repeat often, what we have formerly written; which beside, that it helps the consequence, and makes the juncture better, it quickens the heat of imagination, that often cools in the time of setting down, and gives it new strength, as if it grew lustier, by the going back. As we see in the contention of leaping, they jump farthest, that fetch their race largest: or, as in throwing a dart, or javelin, we force back our arms to make our loose the stronger. Yet, if we have a fair gale of wind, I forbid not the steering out of our sail, so the favour of the gale deceives us not. For all that we invent does please us in the conception, or birth; else we would never set it down. But the safest is to return to our judgement, and handle over again those things, the easiness of which might make them justly suspected. So did the best writers in their beginnings; they imposed upon themselves care, and industry. They did nothing rashly. They obtained first to write well, and then custom made it easy, and a habit. By little and little, their matter showed itself to them more plentifully; their words answered, their composition followed; and all, as in a well-ordered family, presented itself in the place. So that the sum of all is: ready writing makes not good writing; but good writing brings on ready writing. Yet when we think we have got the faculty, it is even then good to resist it: as to give a horse a check sometimes with a bit, which does not so much stop his course, as stir his mettle. Again whether a man's genius is best able to reach, thither it should more and more contend, lift and dilate itself, as men of low stature, raise themselves on their toes; and so oft-times get even, if not eminent. Besides, as it is fit for grown and able writers to stand of themselves and work with their own strength, to trust and endeavour by their own faculties: so it is fit for the beginner, and learner, to study others, and the best. For the mind, and memory are more sharply exercised in comprehending another man's things, than our own; and such as accustom themselves, and are familiar with the best authors, shall ever and anon find somewhat of them in themselves, and in the expression of their minds, even when they feel it not,*



be able to utter something like theirs, which has an authority above their own. Nay, sometimes it is the reward of a man's study, the praise of quoting another man fitly : and though a man be more prone, and able for one kind of writing, than another, yet he must exercise all. For as in an instrument, so in style, there must be a harmony, and consent of parts.

I take this labour in teaching others that they should not be always to be taught ; and I would bring my precepts into practice. For rules are ever of less force, and value than experiments. Yet with this purpose, rather to show the right way to those that come after, then to detect any that have slipped before by error, and I hope it will be more profitable. For men do more willingly listen, and with more favour, to precept, than reprehension. Among diverse opinions of an art, and most of them contrary in themselves, it is hard to make election ; and therefore, though a man cannot invent new things after so many, he may do a welcome work yet to help posterity to judge rightly of the old. But arts and precepts avail nothing, except nature be beneficial, and aiding. And therefore these things are no more written to a dull disposition, than rules of husbandry to a barren soil. No precepts will profit a fool ; no more than beauty will the blind, or music the deaf. As we should take care, that our style in writing, be neither dry, nor empty : we should look again it be not winding, or wanton with far-fetched descriptions ; either is a vice. But that is worse which proceeds out of want, then that which riots out of plenty. The remedy of fruitfulness is easy, but no labour will help the contrary : I will like, and praise some things in a young writer ; which yet if he continue in, I cannot but justly hate him for the same. There is a time to be given all things for maturity ; and that even your country-husband-man can teach ; who to a young plant will not put the pruning knife, because it seems to fear the iron, as not able to admit the scar. No more would I tell a green writer all his faults, lest I should make him grieve and faint, and at last despair. For nothing does more hurt, than to make him so afraid of all things, as he can endeavour nothing. Therefore youth ought to be instructed betimes, and in the best things : for we hold those longest, we take soonest. As the first scent of a vessel lasts : and that tint the wool first receives. Therefore a master should temper his own powers, and descend to the others infirmity. If you pour a glut of water upon a bottle, it receives little of it ; but with a funnel, and by degrees, you shall fill many of them, and spill little of your own ; to their capacity they will all receive, and be full. And as it is fit to read the best authors to youth first, so let them be of the openest, and clearest. As Livy before Salust, Sydney before Donne : and beware of letting them taste Gower, or Chaucer at first, lest falling too much in love with antiquity, and not apprehending the weight, they grow rough and barren in language only. When their judgements are firm, and out of danger, let them read both, the old and the new : but no less take heed, that their new flowers, and sweetness do not as much corrupt, as the others dryness and squallor, if they choose not carefully. Spencer, in affecting the ancients, wrote no language : yet I would have him read for his matter ; but as Virgil read Ennius. The reading of

Homer and Virgil is counselled by Quintilian, as the best way of informing youth, and confirming man. For besides, that the mind is raised with the height, and sublimity of such a verse, it takes spirit from the greatness of the matter, and is tinted with the best things. *Tragic*, and *lyric* poetry are good too: and *comic* with the best, if the manners of the reader be once in safety. In the Greek poets, as also in Plautus, we shall see the economy, and disposition of *poems*, better observed than in Terence, and the later: who thought the sole grace, and virtue of their fable, the sticking in of sentences, as ours do the forcing in of jests.

We should not protect our sloath with the patronage of difficulty. It is a false quarrel against nature, that she helps understanding, but in a few; when the most part of mankind are inclined by her there, if they would take the pains; no less than birds to fly, horses to run, etc. Which if they lose, it is through their own sluggishness, and by that means they become her prodigies, not her children I confess, nature in children is more patient of labour in study, than in age; for the sense of the pain, the judgement of the labour is absent, they do not measure what they have done. And it is the thought, and consideration, that affects us more, than the weariness itself. Plato was not content with the learning, that Athens could give him, but sailed into Italy for Pythagoras's knowledge: and yet not thinking himself sufficiently informed, went into Egypt to the priests, and learned their mysteries. He laboured, so must we. Many things may be learned together, and performed in one point of time; as musicians exercise their memory, their voice, their fingers, and some time their head, and feet at once. And so a preacher, in the invention of matter, election of words, composition of gesture, look, pronunciation, motion, uses all these faculties at once. And if we can express this variety together, why should not diverse studies, at diverse hours, delight, when the variety is able alone to refresh, and repair us? As when a man is weary of writing, to read; and then again of reading, to write. Wherein, howsoever we do many things, yet are we in a sort still fresh to what we begin: we are recreated with change, as the stomach is with meats. But some will say, this variety breeds confusion, and makes, that either we loose all, or hold no more than the last. Why do we not then persuade husbandmen, that they should not till land, help it with marle, lime and compost? Plant hop-gardens, prune trees, look to beehives, rear sheep, and all other cattle at once? It is easier to do many things, and continue, than to do one thing long.

It is not the passing through these learnings that hurts us, but the dwelling and sticking about them. To descend to those extreme anxieties, and foolish cavils of grammarians, is able to break a wit in pieces; being a work of manifold misery, and vainness, to be *elementary senses*. Yet even letters are, as it were, the bank of words, and restore themselves to an author, as the pawns of language. But talking and eloquence are not the same: to speak, and to speak well, are two things. A fool may talk, but a wise man speaks, and out of the observation, knowledge, and use of things. Many writers perplex their readers, and hearers with mere *nonsense*. Their writings need sunshine. Pure and neat

language I love, yet plain and customary. A barbarous phrase has often made me out of love with a good sense ; and doubtful writing has wracked me beyond my patience. The reason why a poet is said, that he ought to have all knowledges, is that he should not be ignorant of the most, especially of those he will handle. And indeed, when the attaining of them is possible, it were a sluggish, and base thing to despair. For frequent imitation of anything, becomes a habit quickly. If a man should prosecute as much, as could be said of everything ; his work would find no end.

Speech is the only benefit man has to express his excellence of mind above other creatures. It is the instrument of society. Therefore Mercury, who is the President of Language, is called *Deorum hominum, interpres*. In all speech, words and sense, are as the body, and the soul. The sense is as the life and soul of language, without which all words are dead. Sense is wrought out of experience, the knowledge of humane life, and actions, or of the liberal arts, which the *Greeks* called *ἐγκυκλοπαιδειαν*. Words are the peoples ; yet there is a choice of them to be made. For *Verborum delectus, origo est eloquentiæ*. They are to be chosen according to the persons we make speak, or the things we speak of. Some are of the camp, some of the council-board, some of the shop, some of the sheep-coat, some of the pulpit, some of the bar, etc. And herein is seen their elegance, and propriety, when we use them fitly, and draw them forth to their just strength and nature, by way of translation, or *metaphor*. But in this translation we must only serve necessity (*Nam temere nihil transfertur à prudenti*) or commodity, which is a kind of necessity ; that is, when we either absolutely want a word to express by, and that is necessity, or when we have not so fit a word, and that is commodity. And when we avoid loss by it, and escape obscenity, and gain in the grace and property, which helps significance. Metaphors farfetched hinder to be understood, and affected, lose their grace. Or when the person fetches his translations from a wrong place. As if a privy-Councillor should at the table take his metaphor from a dicing-house, or ordinary, or a vintner's vault ; or a justice of peace draw his similitudes from mathematics ; or a *divine* from a bawdy-house, or taverns ; or a gentleman of Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, or the Midland, should fetch all his illustrations to his country neighbours from shipping, and tell them of the main *shear*, and the boulin. Metaphors are thus many times deformed, as in him that said, *Castratam morte Aphricani Rempublicam*. And another, *stercus curiæ Glauciam*. And *Canâ nive conspuat Alpes*. All attempts that are new in this kind, are dangerous, and somewhat hard, before they be softened with use. A man coins not a new word without some peril, and less fruit ; for it happen to be received, the praise is but moderate ; if refused, the scorn is assured. Yet we must adventure, for things, at first hard and rough, are by use made tender and gentle. It is an honest error that is committed, following great chiefs.

Custom is the most certain mistress of language, as the public stamp makes the current money. But we must not be too frequent with the mint, everyday coining. Nor fetch words from the extreme and utmost ages ; since the chief

virtue of a style is perspicuity, and nothing so vicious in it, as to need an interpreter. Words borrowed of antiquity, do lend a kind of majesty to style, and are not without their delight sometimes. For they have the authority of years, and out of their intermission do win to themselves a kind of grace like newness. But the eldest of the present, and newest of the past language is the best. For what was the ancient language, which some men so dote upon, but the ancient custom? Yet when I name custom, I understand not the vulgar custom: for that were a precept no less dangerous to language, than life, if we should speak or live after the manners of the vulgar: but that I call custom of speech, which is the consent of the learned; as custom of life, which is the consent of the good. Virgil was most loving of antiquity; yet how rarely does he insert *aquí*, and *pictai*! Lucretius is scabrous and rough in these; he seeks them: as some do *Chaucerisms* with us, which were better expunged and banished. Some words are to be culled out for ornament and colour, as we gather flowers to straw houses, or make garlands; but they are better when they grow to our style; as in a meadow, where though the mere grass and greenness delights, yet the variety of flowers does heighten and beautify. Marry, we must not play, or riot too much with them, as in *Paronomasies*: nor use too swelling, or ill-sounding words; *Quoe per salebras, atq, saxa cadunt*. It is true, there is no sound but shall find some lovers, as the bitterest confections are grateful to some palates. Our composition must be more accurate in the beginning and end, than in the midst; and in the end more, than in the beginning; for through the midst the stream bears us. And this is attained by custom more than care or diligence. We must express readily, and fully, not profusely. There is difference between a liberal, and a prodigal hand. As it is a great point of art, when our matter requires it, to enlarge, and veer out all sail; so to take it in, and contract it, is of no less praise when the argument does ask it. Either of them has their fitness in the place. A good man always profits by his endeavour, by his help; year, when he is absent; nay, when he is dead, by his example and memory. So good authors in their style: a strict and succinct style is that, where you can take away nothing without loss, and that loss to be manifest. The brief style is that which expresses much in little. The concise style, which expresses not enough, but leaves somewhat to be understood. The abrupt style, which has many breaches, and does not see to end, but fall. The congruent, and harmonious fitting of parts in a sentence, has almost the fastening, and force of knitting, and connection: as in stones well squared, which will rise strong a great way without mortar.

Periods are beautiful when they are not too long; for so they have their strength too, as in a pike or javelin. As we must take the care that our words and sense be clear; so, if the obscurity happen through the hearers, or readers want of understanding, I am not to answer for them; no more than for their not listening or marking; I must neither find them cares, nor mind. But a man cannot put a word so in sense, but something about it will illustrate it, if the writer understand himself. For order helps much to perspicuity, as

confusion hurts. *Rectitudo lucem adfert ; obliquitas et circumductio offuscat.* We should therefore speak what we can, the nearest way, so as we keep our gate, not leap ; for too short may as well be not let into the memory, as too long not kept in. Whatsoever looses the grace, and clearness, converts into a riddle ; the obscurity is marked, but not the value. That perishes, and is past by, like the pearl in the fable. Our style should be like a skein of silk, to be carried, and found by the right thread, not revelled, and perplexed ; then all is a knot, a heap. There are words, that do as much raise a style, as others can depress it. Superlation, and overmuchness amplifies. It may be above faith, but never above a mean. It was ridiculous in *Cestius*, when he said of Alexander : *Premitt Oceanus, quasi indignetur, quod terras relinquo ;* But propitiously from *Virgil* :

*Credas innare reuulsas*

*Cycladus.*

He does not say it was so, but seemed to be so. Although it be somewhat incredible, that is excused before it be spoken. But there are *hyperboles*, which will become one language, that will by no means admit another. As *Eos esse P.R. exercitus, qui coelum possint perrumpere* : who would say this with us, but a mad man? Therefore we must consider in every tongue what is used, what received. Quintilian warns us, that in no kind of translation, or metaphor or allegory, we make a turn from what we began ; as if we fetch the original of our metaphor from sea, and billows ; we end not in flames and ashes ; it is a most fowl inconsequence. Neither must we draw out our allegory too long, lest either we (should) make ourselves obscure, or fall into affection, which is childish. But why do men depart at all from the right, and natural ways of speaking? Sometimes for necessity, when we are driven, or think it fitter to speak that in obscure words, or by circumstance, which uttered plainly would offend the hearers. Or to avoid obscenity, or sometimes for pleausre, and variety ; as travellers turn out of the high way, drawn, either by the commodity of a footpath, or the delicacy, or freshness of the fields. And all this is called *ε'σχηματισμενη* or figured language.

*Language* most shows a man : speak that I may see you. It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the image of the parent of it. the mind. No glass renders a man's form, or likeness, so true as his speech. Nay, it is likened to a man : and as we consider feature, and composition in a man ; so words in language : in the greatness, aptness, sound, structure, and harmony of it. Some men are tall, and big, so some language is high and great. Then the words are chosen, their sound ample, the composition full, the absolution plenteous, and powered out, all grave, sinewy and strong. Some are little, and dwarfs : so of speech it is humble, and low, the words poor and flat ; the members and periods, thin and weak, without knitting, or number. The middle are of a just stature. There the language is plain, and pleasing : even without stopping, round without swelling ; all well-torned, composed, elegant, and accurate. The vicious language is vast, and gaping, swelling, and

irregular; when it contends to be high, full of rock mountain, and pointedness: as it affects to be low, it is abject, and creeps, full of hogs, and holes. And according to their subject, these styles vary, and lose their names: for that which is high and lofty, declaring excellent matter, becomes vast and tumorous, speaking of petty and inferior things: so that which was even, and apt in a mean and plain subject, will appear most poor and humble in a high argument. Would you not laugh, to meet a great counsellor of state in a flat cap, with his trunk hose, and a hobby-horse cloak, his gloves under his girdle, and yond haberdasher in a velvet gown, furred with sables? There is a certain latitude in these things, by which we find the degrees. The next thing to the stature, is the figure and feature in language: that is, whether it be round, and straight, which consists of short and succinct *periods*, numerous, and polished; or square and firm, which is to have equal and strong parts, everywhere answerable, and weighed. The third is the skin, and coat, which rests in the well-joining, cementing, and coagmentation of words; when as it is smooth, gentle, and sweet; like a table, upon which you may run your finger without rubs, and your nail cannot find a joint; nor horrid, rough, wrinkled, gaping, or chafed. After these the flesh, blood, and bones comes in question. We say it is a fleshy style, when there is much *periphrasis*, and circuit of words; and when with more than enough, it grows fat and corpulent; *Arvina orationis*, full of sweat and tallow. It has blood, and juice, when the words are proper and apt, their sound sweet, and the phrase neat and picked. *Oratio uncta and benè pasta*. But where there is redundancy, both the blood and juice are faulty, and vicious. *Redundat sanguine, quoe multò plus dicit, quàm necesse est*. Juice in language is somewhat less than blood, for if the words be but becoming, and signifying, and the sense gentle, there is juice: but where that wanted, the language is thin, flagging, poor, starved, scarce covering the bone; and shows like stones in a sack. Some men, to avoid redundancy, run into that; and while they strive to have no ill blood, or juice, they loose their good. There be some styles, again, that have not less blood, but less flesh, and corpulence. These are bony, and sinewy: *Ossa habent, et nervos*.

It was well noted by the late L. St. *Alban*, that the study of words is the first distemper of learning: vain matter the second: and a third distemper is deceit, or the likeness of truth; imposture held up by credulity. All these are the cobwebs of learning, and to let them grow in us, is either sluttish or foolish. Nothing is more ridiculous, than to make an author a *dictator*, as the schools have done *Aristotle*. The damage is infinite, knowledge receives by it. For to many things a man should own but a temporary belief, and a suspension of his own judgement, not an absolute resignation of himself, or a perpetual captivity. Let *Aristotle*, and others have their dues; but if we can make further discoveries of truth and fitness than they, why are we envied? Let us beware, while we strive to add, we do not diminish, or deface; we may improve, but not augment. By discrediting falsehood, truth grows in request. We must not go about like men anguished, and perplexed, for vicious

affectation of praise: but calmly study the separation of opinions, find the errors have intervened, awake antiquity, call former times into question; but make no parties with the present, nor follow any fierce undertakers, mingle no matter of doubtful credit, with the simplicity of truth, but gently stir the mould about the root of the question, and avoid all digladiations, facility of credit, or superstitious simplicity; seek the consonancy, and concatenation of truth; stoop only to point of necessity, and what leads to convenience. Then make exact animadversion where style has degenerated, where flourished, and thrived in choiceness of phrase, round and clean composition of sentence, sweet falling of the clause, varying an illustration by tropes and figures, weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention, and depth of judgement. This is *Monte potiri*, to get the hill. For no perfect discovery can be made upon a flat or a level.

Now, that I have informed you in the knowing of these things; let me lead you by the hand a little farther, in the direction of the use; and make you an able writer by practice. The conceits of the mind are pictures of things, and the tongue is the interpreter of those pictures. The order of God's creatures in themselves, is not only admirable, and glorious, but eloquent; then he who could apprehend the consequence of things in their truth, and utter his apprehensions as truly, were the best writer, or speaker. Therefore Cicero said much, when he said, *Dicere rectè nemo potest, nisi qui prudenter intelligit*. The shame of speaking unskilfully were small, if the tongue only thereby were disgraced: but as the image of a *king*, in his seal ill-represented, is not so much a blemish to the wax, or the signet that sealed it, as to the prince it represents; so disordered speech is not so much injury to the lips that give it forth, as to the disproportion, and incoherence of things in themselves, so negligently expressed. Neither can his mind be thought to be in tune, whose words do jar; nor his reason in frame, whose sentence is preposterous; nor his elocution clear and perfect, whose utterance breaks itself into fragments and uncertainties: were it not a dishonour to a mighty prince, to have a majesty of his umbassage spoilt by a careless Ambassador? and is it not as great an indignity, that an excellent conceit and capacity, by the indiligence of an idle tongue, should be disgraced? Negligent speech does not only discredit the person of the speaker, but it discredits the opinion of his reason and judgement; it discredits the force and uniformity of the matter, and substance. If it be so then in words, which fly and escape censure, and where one good *phrase* begs pardon for many incongruities, and faults; how shall he then be thought wise, whose penning is thin and shallow? How shall you look for wit from him, whose leisure and head, assisted with the examination of his eyes, yield you no life, or sharpness in his writing?

*In writing* (of letters) there is to be regarded the invention, and the fashion. For the invention, that arises upon your business; whereof there can be no rules of more certainty, or precepts of better direction given, than conjecture can lay down, from the several occasions of men's particular lives, and vocations: but sometimes men make business of kindness: As (*I could not satisfy*

*myself, till I had discharged my remembrance, and charged my Letter with recommendations to you.) Or, (My business is no other, than to testify my willingness to do you all kind offices.) Or, (Sir, have you leisure to descend to the remembering of that assurance you have long possessed in your servant; and upon your next opportunity, make him happy with some commands from you?) Or, the like; that go abegging for some meaning, and labour to be delivered of the great burden of nothing. When you have invented, and that your business be matter, and not bare form, or mere ceremony, but some earnest: then are you to proceed to the ordering of it, and digesting the parts, which is had out of two circumstances. One is the understanding of the persons, to whom you are to write; the other is the coherence of your sentence. For men's capacity (you are), to weigh, what will be apprehended with greatest attention, or leisure; what next regarded, and longed for especially; and what last will leave (most) satisfaction, and (as it were) the sweetest memorial, and brief of all that is past in his understanding, whom you write to. For the consequence of sentences, you must be sure, that every clause do give the *Q.* one to the other, and be bespoken ere it come. So much for *invention and order.**

Now for fashion, it consists in four things, which are qualities of your style. The first is brevity. For they must not be treatises, or discourses (your letters) except it be to learned men. And even among them, there is a kind of thrift, and saving of words. Therefore you are to examine the clearest passages of your understanding, and through them to convey the sweetest, and most significant words you can device; that you may the easier teach them the readiest way to another man's apprehension, and open their meaning fully, roundly and distinctly. So as the reader may not think a second view cast away upon your letter. And though respect be a part following this; yet now here, and still I must remember it. If you write to a man, whose estate and senses you are familiar with, you may the bolder (to set a task to his brain) venture on a knot. But if to your superior, you are bound to measure him in three farther points: first, your interest in him: secondly, his capacity in your letters: thirdly, his leisure to peruse them. For your interest, or favour with him, you are to be the shorter, or longer, more familiar, or submiss, as he will afford you time. For his capacity, you are to be quicker, and fuller of those reaches, and glances of wit, or learning, as he is able to entertain them. For his leisure, you are commanded to the greater briefness, as his place is of greater discharges, and cares. But, with your betters, you are not to put riddles of wit, by being too scarce of words: nor to cause the trouble of making abbreviations by writing too riotous, and wastingly. *Brevity* is attained in matter, by avoiding idle complements, prefaces, protestations, parenthesis, superfluous circuit of figures, and digressions: in the composition, by omitting conjunctions, (*not only; but also*) (*both the one, and the other*) (*whereby it comes to pass*) and such like idle particles, that have no great business in a serious letter, but breaking of sentences; as often-times a short journey is made long, by unnecessary baits.



But, as *Quintilian* said, there is a briefness of the parts sometimes, that makes the whole long, as, *I came to the stairs, I took a pair of oars, they launched out, rowed a pace, I landed at the court-gate, I paid my fare, went up to the presence, asked for my Lord, I was admitted. All this is but, I went to the Court, and spoke with my Lord.* This is the fault of some Latin writers, within these last hundred years, of my reading, and perhaps Seneca may be impeached of it; I accuse him not.

The next property of Epistolary style is perspicuity, and is often-times (endangered by the former quality brevity, often-times) by affectation of some wit ill angled for, or ostentation of some hidden terms of art. Few words they darken speech, and so do too many: as well too much light hurts the eyes, as too little; and a long bill of chancery confounds the understanding, as much as the shortest note. Therefore, let not your letters be penned like English statutes, and this is obtained. These vices are eschewed by pondering your business well, and distinctly conceiving yourself, which is much furthered by your thoughts, and letting them as well come forth to the light, and judgement of your own outward senses, as to the censure of other men's ears: for that is the reason why many good scholars speak but fumblingly; like a rich man, that, for want of particular note and difference, can bring you no certain ware readily out of his shop. Hence it is, that talkative shallow men do often content the hearers, more than the wise. But this may find a speedier redress in writing; where all comes under the last examination of the eyes. First mind it well, then pen it, then examine it, then amend it; and you may be in the better hope of doing reasonably well. Under this virtue may come plainness, which is not to be curious in the order, as to answer a letter, as if you were to answer to interrogatories: as to the first, first; and to the second, secondly, etc. But both in method (and words) to use (as ladies do in their attire) a diligent kind of negligence, and their sportive freedom; though with some men you are not to jest, or practise tricks; yet the delivery of the most important things, may be carried with such a grace, as that it may yield a pleasure to the conceit of the reader. There must be store, though no excess of terms; as if you are to name *store*, sometimes you may call it choice, sometimes plenty; sometimes copiousness, or variety: but ever so, that the word which comes in lieu, have not such difference of meaning, as that it may put the sense of the first in hazard to be mistaken. You are not to cast a ring for the perfumed terms of the time, as *accommodation, complement, spirit, etc.* But use them properly in their place, as others.

There follows *life*, and *quickness*, which is the strength and sinews (as it were) of your penning by pithy sayings, similitudes, and conceits, allusions to some known history, or other common place, such as are in the courtier, and the second book of *Cicero de oratore*.

The last is; respect to discern, what fits yourself; him to whom you write; and that which you handle, which is a quality fit to conclude the rest, because it does include all. And that must proceed from ripeness of judgement, which

as one truly said, is got by four means, *God, nature, diligence, and conversation*. Serve the first well, and the rest will serve you.

We have spoken sufficiently of oratory; let us now make a diversion to *poetry*. *Poetry*, in the primogeniture, had many peccant humours, and is made to have more now, through the levity, and inconstancy of men's judgements. Whereas, indeed, it is the most prevailing eloquence, and of the most exalted *charact*. Now the discredits and disgraces are many it has received, through men's study of depravation or calumny: their practice being to give it diminution of credit, by lessening the professors' estimation, and making the age afraid of their liberty—and the age is grown so tender of her fame, as she calls all writings *aspersions*. That is the state-word, the phrase of court (*Placentia Colledge*), which some call parasites place, the inn of ignorance.

While I name no persons, but deride follies; why should any man confess, or betray himself? Why does not that of S. Hierome come into their mind; *Vbi generalis est de vitiis disputatio, ibi nullius esse personae injuriam*? Is it such an inexplicable crime in poets to tax vices generally; and no offence in them who, by their exception, confess they have committed them particularly? Are we fallen into those times that we must not.

*Auriculus teneras mordaci rodere vero?*

*Remedii votum semper verius erat, quàm spes*. If men may by no means write freely, or speak truth, but when it offends not; why do physicians cure with sharp medicines, or corrosives? Is not the same equally lawful in the cure of the mind, that is in the cure of the body? Some vices (you will say), are so foul, that it is better they should be done, than spoken. But they that take offence where no name, character, or signature does blazon them, seem to me like affected as women; who, if they hear anything ill spoken of the ill of their sex, are presently moved, as if the contumely respected their particular and, on the contrary, when they hear good of good women, conclude, that it belongs to them all. If I see anything that touches me, shall I come forth a betrayer of myself, presently? No; if I be wise, I will dissemble it; if honest, I will avoid it: lest I (should) publish that on my own forehead, which I saw there noted without a title. A man, that is on the mending hand, will either ingeniously confess, or wisely dissemble his disease. And, the wise, and virtuous, will never think anything belongs to themselves that is written, but rejoice that the good are warned not to be such; and the ill to leave to be such. The person offended has no reason to be offended with the writer, but with himself; and so to declare that properly to belong to him, which was so spoken of all men, as it could be no man's several, but his that would wilfully and desperately claim it. It suffices I know, what kind of persons I displease, men bred in the declining, and decay of virtue, betrothed to their own vices; that have abandoned, or prostituted their good names; hungry and ambitious of infamy, invested in all deformity; enthralled to ignorance and malice, of a hidden and concealed malignity, and that hold a concomitancy with all evil.

*What is a Poet?*

A *poet*, is that, which by the Greeks is called κατ' ἐξοχήν, ο ποιητής  
a maker, or a fainer: his art, an art of imitation, or faining; expressing the  
life of man in fit measure, numbers, and harmony, according to *Aristotle*:  
from the word ποιεῖν which signifies to make, or fain. Hence, he is called a  
*poet*, not he which writes in measure only; but that fains and forms a fable,  
and writes things like the truth For, the fable and fiction is (as it were) the  
form and soul of any poetical work, or *poem*.

*What mean you by a Poem?*

A *poem* is not alone any work, or composition of the poets in many, or few  
verses; but even one alone verse sometimes makes a perfect poem As, when  
Aeneas hangs up, and consecrates the Arms of *Abas*, with this inscription:

*Aeneas haec de Danaïs victoribus arma*

And calls it a poem, or *Carmen* Such are those in *Martial*

*Omnia, Castor, emis: sic fiet, ut omnia vendas.*

And,

*Pauper videri Cinna vult, and est pauper.*

So were *Horace's* Odes called, *Carmina*; his *Lyric* Songs And *Lucretius*  
designs a whole book, in his sixth:

*Quod in primo quoque carmine claret*

And anciently, all the oracles were called, *Carmina*; or whatever sentence was  
expressed, were it much or little, it was called, an epic, dramatic, lyric, elegiac,  
or epigrammatic poem

*But, how differs a poem from what we call Poesy?*

A poem, as I have told you, is the work of the poet, the end, and fruit of  
his labour, and study. Poesy is his skill, or craft of making the very fiction  
itself, the reason, or form of the work. And these three voices differ, as the  
thing done, the doing, and the doer; the thing fained, the faining, and the  
fainer: so the poem, the *poesy*, and the *poet*. Now, the *poesy* is the habit, or  
the art: nay, rather the queen of arts. which had her original from heaven,  
received thence from the Hebrews and had in prime estimation with the  
Greeks, transmitted to the Latins, and all nations, that professed civility. The  
study of it (if we will trust *Aristotle*) offers to mankind a certain rule, and  
pattern of living well, and happily, disposing us to all civil offices of society  
If we will believe *Tully*, it nourishes, and instructs our youth; delights our  
age, adorns our prosperity; comforts our adversity; entertains us at home,  
keeps us company abroad, travails with us; watches, divides the times of our

earnest, and sports; shares in our country recesses, and recreations; insomuch as the wisest and best learned have thought her the absolute mistress of manners, and nearest of kin to virtue. And, whereas they entitle *philosophy* to be a rigid, and austere *poesy*: they have (on the contrary) styled *poesy*, a dulcet, and gentle *philosophy*, which leads on, and guides us by the hand to action, with a ravishing delight, and incredible sweetness. But, before we handle the kind of *poems*, with their special differences; or make court to the art itself, as a mistress, I would lead you to the knowledge of our *poet*, by a perfect information what he is, or should be by nature, by exercise, by imitation, by study; and so bring him down through the disciplines of *grammar*, *logic*, *rhetoric* and the *ethics*, adding somewhat, out of all, peculiar to himself, and worthy of your admittance, or reception.

First, we require in our poet, or maker (for that title our language affords him, elegantly, with the Greek), a goodness of natural wit. For, whereas all other arts consist of doctrine, and precepts: the *poet* must be able by nature, and instinct, to pour out the treasure of his mind; and, as *Seneca* says, *Aliquando secundum Anacreontem insanire, jucundum esse*: by which he understands, the *poetical rapture*. And according to that of *Plato*; *Frustrà Poeticas fores sui compos pulsavit*: and of *Aristotle*; *Nullum magnum ingenium sine mixturâ dementiæ fuit. Nec potest grande aliquid, and supra coeteros loqui, nisi mota mens*. Then it rises higher, as by a divine instinct, when it contemns common, and known conceptions. It utters somewhat above a mortal mouth. Then it gets a loft, and flies away with his rider, whether, before, it was doubtful to ascend. This the *poets* understood by their *Helicon*, *Pegasus*, or *Parnassus*; and this made *Ovid* to boast:

*Est, Deus in nobis; agitante calescimus illo:  
Sedibus æthereis spiritus ille venit.*

And *Lipsius*, to affirm; *Scio, Poetam neminem proestantem fuisse, sine part quâdam uberiore divinæ auriæ*. And, hence it is, that the coming up of good poets (for I mind not *mediocres*, or *imos*), is so thin and rare among us; every beggarly corporation affords the state a major, or two bailiffs, yearly: but, *solus Rex aut Poeta, non quotannis nascitur*. To this perfection of nature in our *poet*, we require exercise of those parts, and frequent. If his wit will not arrive suddenly at the dignity of the ancients, let him not yet fall out with it, quarrel, or be over-hastily angry: offer, to turn it away from study, in a humour; but come to it again upon better cogitation; try another time, with labour. If then it succeed not, cast not away the quills, yet: nor scratch the wainscot, beat not the poor desk; but bring all to the forge, and file, again; turn it anew. There is no statute *law* of the kingdom bids you be a poet, against your will; or the first quarter. If it come, in a year, or two, it is well. The common rhymers pour forth verses, such as they are, (*ex tempore*) but there never comes from them one sense, worth the life of a day. A rhymers, and a poet, are two things. It is said of the incomparable *Virgil*, that he brought forth his verses like a bear, and after formed them with

licking. Scaliger, the Father, writes it of him, that he made a quantity of versés in the morning, which aforenight he reduced to a less number. But, that which Valerius Maximus had left recorded of Euripides, the tragic poet, his answer to Alcestis, another poet, is as memorable, as modest: who, when it was told to Alcestis, that Euripides had in three days brought forth but three verses, and those with some difficulty, and throws Alcestis, glorying he could with ease have sent forth a hundred in the space, Euripides roundly replied, like enough. But, here is the difference; your verses will not last those three days; mine will to all time. Which was, as to tell him, he could not write a verse. I have met many of these rattles, that made a noise, and buzzed They had their hummy; and, no more. Indeed, things, wrote with labour, deserve to be so read, and will last their age. The third requisite in our *poet*, or maker, is *imitation*, to be able to convert the substance or riches of another *poet*, to his own use. To make choice of one excellent man above the rest, and so to follow him, till he grow very *He*: or, so like him, as the copy may be mistaken for the principal. Not, as a creature, that swallows, what it takes in, crude, raw, or indigested; but, that feeds with an appetite, and has a stomach to concoct, divide, and turn all into nourishment. Not, to imitate servilely, as Horace said, and catch at vices, for virtue: but, to draw forth out of the best, and choicest flowers, with the bee, and turn all into honey, work it into one relish, and savour: make our *imitation* sweet: observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them. How Virgil, and Statius have imitated Homer; how Horace, Archilochus, how Alcoeus, and the other *Lyrics*: and so of the rest. But, that, which we especially require in him is an exactness of study, and multiplicity of reading, which makes a full man, not alone enabling him to know the *history*, or argument of a *poem*, and to report it: but so to master the matter, and style, as to show, he knows, how to handle, place, or dispose of either, with elegance, when need shall be. And not think, he can leap forth suddenly a *poet*, by dreaming he has been in *Parnassus*, or, having washed his lips (as they say) in *Helicon*. There goes more to his making, than so. For to nature, exercise, imitation, and study, *art* must be added, to make all these perfect. And, though these challenge to themselves much, in the making up of our maker, it is art only can lead him to perfection, and leave him there in possession, as planted by her hand. It is the assertion of Tully, if to an excellent nature, there happen an accession, or conformation of learning, and discipline, there will then remain somewhat noble, and singular. For, as Simylus says in *Stobaeus*;

οὐτε φύσις ἰκανή γίνεται τέχνης ἄτερ  
οὐτε πᾶν τέχνη μὴ φύσιν κεκτημένη

without art, nature can never be perfect; and without nature, art can claim no being. But, our poet must beware, that his study be not only to learn of himself: for, he that shall affect to do that, confesses his ever having a fool to his master. He must read many; but, ever the best, and choicest: those, that can teach him anything, he must ever account his masters, and reverence:

among whom Horace, and (he that taught him) Aristotle, deserve to be the first in estimation. Aristotle was the first accurate *critic*, and truest judge; nay, the greatest *philosopher*, the world ever had: for, he noted the vices of all knowledges, in all creatures, and out of many men's perfections in a science, he formed still one art. So he taught us two offices together, how we ought to judge rightly of others, and what we ought to imitate specially in ourselves. But all this in vain, without a natural wit, and a poetical nature in chief. For, no man, so soon as he knows this, or reads it, shall be able to write the better; but as he is adapted to it by nature, he shall grow the perfecter writer. He must have *civil prudence*, and *eloquence* and that whole; not taken up by snatches, or pieces, in sentences, or remnants, when he will handle business, or carry counsels, as if he came then out of the declamator's gallery, or shadow, but furnished out of the body of the state, which commonly is the school of men. The *poet* is the nearest borderer upon the orator, and expresses all his virtues, though he be tied more to numbers; is his equal in ornament, and above him in his strengths. And, (of the kind) the *comic* comes nearest: because, in moving the minds of men, and stirring of affections (in which oratory shows, and especially approves her eminence) he chiefly excels. What figure of a body was Lysippus ever able to form with his graver, or Apelles to paint with his pencil, as the comedy to life expresses so many, and various affections of the mind? There shall the spectator see some, insulting with joy; others, fretting with melancholy; raging with anger; mad with love; boiling with avarice; undone with riot, tortured with expectation; consumed with fear: no perturbation in common life, but the orator finds an example of it in the scene. And then, for the elegance of language, read but this inscription on the *Grave of a Comic Poet*:

*Immortales mortales, si fas esset, flere,  
Flerent divae Camoenae Naevium Poetam:  
Itaque postquam est Orcino traditus thesauro,  
Obliti sunt Romae, linguâ loqui Latina.*

Or, that modester testimony given by Lucius Aelius Stilo upon Plautus, who affirmed, *Musas, si latine loqui voluissent, Plautino sermone fuisse loquuturas*. And that illustrious judgement by the most learned M. Varro of him; who pronounced him the *prince of letters*, and *elegance*, in the Roman language.

I am not of that opinion to conclude a *poet's* liberty within the narrow limits of laws, which either the *grammarians*, or *philosophers* prescribe. For, before they found out those laws, there were many excellent poets, that fulfilled them. Amongst whom none more perfect than Sophocles, who lived a little before Aristotle. Which of the Greeklings dared ever give precepts to Demosthenes? Or to Pericles (whom the age surnamed *heavenly*), because he seemed to thunder, and lighten, with his language? Or to Alcibiades, who had rather nature for his guide, than art for his master?

But, whatsoever nature at any time dictated to the most happy, or long exercise to the most laborious; that the wisdom, and learning of Aristotle

has brought into an art: because, he understood the causes of things: and what other men did by chance or custom, he does by reason; and not only found out the way not to err, but the short way we should take, not to err.

Many things in Euripides has Aristophanes wittily reprehended; not out of art, but out of truth. For, Euripides is sometimes peccant, as he is most times perfect. But, judgement when it is greatest, if reason does not accompany it, is not ever absolute.

To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets, and not of all poets, but the best. *Nemo infaelicus de Poetis judicavit, quàm qui de Poetis scripsit.* But, some will say, critics are a kind of tinkers, that make more faults, than they mend ordinarily. See their diseases, and those of *grammarians*. It is true, many bodies are the worse for the meddling with. and the multitude of physicians has destroyed many sound patients, with their wrong practice. But the office of a true *critic*, or *ensor*, is, not to throw by a letter anywhere, or damn an innocent syllable, but lay the words together, and amend them; judge sincerely of the author, and his matter, which is the sign of solid, and perfect learning in a man. Such was Horace, an author of much civility; and (if any one among the heathen can be) the best master, both of virtue, and wisdom; an excellent, and true judge upon cause, and reason; not because he thought so, but because he knew so, out of use and experience

*Cato*, the *Grammarian*, a defender of *Lucilius*.

*Canto Grammaticus*, *Latina Syren*,

*Qui solus legit, and facit Poetas.*

*Quintilian* of the same heresy, but rejected.

Horace his judgement of Choerilus, defended against Joseph Scaliger. And, of Laberius, against Julius

But chiefly his opinion of Plautus, vindicated against many, that are offended, and say, it is a hard censure upon the parent of all conceit, and sharpness. And, they wish it had not fallen from so great a master, and censor in the art: whose bondmen knew better how to judge of Plautus, than any that dare patronize the family of learning in this age; who could not be ignorant of the judgement of the times, in which he lived, when *poetry*, and the Latin language were at the height: especially, being a man so conversant, and inwardly familiar with the censures of great men, that did discourse of these things daily amongst themselves. Again, a man so gracious, and in high favour with the emperor, as Augustus often called him his witty manling, (for the littleness of his stature); and (if we may trust antiquity) had designed him for a Secretary of State; and invited him to the palace, which he modestly prayed off, and refused.

Horace did so highly esteem Terence's Comedies, as he ascribes the art in comedy to him alone, among the Latins, and joins him with Menander.

Now let us see what may be said for either, to defend Horace's judgement to posterity; and not wholly to condemn Plautus

The parts of a comedy are the same with a tragedy, and the end is partly the same. For, they both delight, and teach: the *comics* are called διδάκαλοι, of the *Greeks*; no less than the *tragics*.

Nor, is the moving of laughter always the end of *comedy*, that is rather a fooling for the people's delight, or their fooling. For, as Aristotle says rightly, the moving of laughter is a fault in *comedy*, a kind of turpitude, that depraves some part of a man's nature without a disease. As a wry face without pain moves laughter, or a deformed vizard, or a rude clown, dressed in a lady's habit, and using her actions, we dislike, and scorn such representations; which made the ancient philosophers ever think laughter unfitting in a wise man. And this induced Plato to esteem of Homer, as a sacrilegious person; because he presented the gods sometimes laughing. As, also, it is divinely said of Aristotle, that to seem ridiculous is a part of dishonesty, and foolish.

So that, what either in the words, or sense of an author, or in the language, or actions of men, is a wry, or depraved, does strangely stir mean affections, and provoke for the most part to laughter. And therefore it was clear that all insolent, and obscene speeches; jests upon the best men; injuries to particular persons; perverse and sinister sayings (and the rather unexpected) in the old comedy, did more laughter; especially, where it did imitate any dishonesty; and scurrility came forth in the place of wit: which who understands the nature and genius of laughter, cannot but perfectly know.

Of which Aristophanes affords an ample harvest, having not only outgone Plautus, or any other in that kind; but expressed all the moods, and figures, of what is ridiculous, oddly. In short, as vinegar is not accounted good, until the wine be corrupted: so jests that are true and natural, seldom raise laughter, with the beast, the multitude. They love nothing, that is right, and proper. The farther it runs from reason, or possibility with them, the better it is. What could have made them laugh, like to see Socrates presented, that example of all good life, honesty, and virtue, to have him hoisted up with a pulley, and there play the philosopher, in a basket? Measure, how many foot a flea could skip *geometrically* by a just scale, and edify the people from the engine? This was theatrical wit, right stage-jesting, and relishing a play-house, invented for scorn, and laughter; whereas, if it had savoured of equity, truth, perspicuity, and candour, to have tasted a wise, or a learned palate, spit it out presently; this is bitter and profitable, this instructs, and would inform us; what need we know anything, that are nobly borne, more than a horse-race, or a hunting-match, our day to break with citizens, and such innate mysteries? This is truly leaping from the stage to the tumbrell again, reducing all wit to the original Dungcart.

*Of the magnitude, and compass of any Fable,  
Epic, or Dramatic*

To the resolving of this *question*, we must first agree in the definition of the fable. The fable is called the *imitation* of one entire, and perfect action; whose parts are so joined, and knit together, as nothing in the structure can



be changed, or taken away, without impairing, or troubling the whole; of which there is a proportionable magnitude in the members. As for example; if a man would build a house, he would first appoint a place to build it in, which he would define within certain bounds: so in the constitution of a *poem*, the action is aimed at by the *poet*, which answers place in a building; and that action has his largeness, compass, and proportion. But, as a court, or king's palace, requires other dimensions than a private house: so the *epic* asks a magnitude, from other poems. Since, what is place in the one, is action in the other, the difference is in space. So that by this definition we conclude the fable, to be the imitation of one perfect, and entire action; as one perfect, and entire place is required to a building. By perfect, we understand that, to which nothing is wanting; as place to the building, that is raised, and action to the fable, that is formed. It is perfect, perhaps, not for a court, or king's palace, which requires a greater ground; but for the structure we would raise. So the space of the action, may not prove large enough for the *epic fable*, yet be perfect for the *dramatic*, and whole.

*Whole*, we call that, and perfect, which has a *beginning*, a *midst*, and an *end*. So the place of any building may be whole, and entire, for that work; though too little for a palace. As, to a tragedy or a comedy, the action may be convenient, and perfect, that would not fit an epic poem in magnitude. So a lion is a perfect creature in himself, though it be less, than (an elephant. The head of a lion is a whole, though it be less, than) that of a buffalo, or a rhinoceros. They differ; but *in species*: either in the kind is absolute. Both have their parts, and either the whole. Therefore, as in every body; so in every action, which is the subject of a just work, there is required a certain proportionable greatness, neither too vast, nor too minute. For that which happens to the eyes, when we behold a body, the same happens to the memory, when we contemplate an action. I look upon a monstrous giant, as *Titus* whose body covered nine acres of land, and mine eye sticks upon every part; the whole that consists of those parts, will never be taken in at one entire view. So in a *fable*, if the action be too great, we can never comprehend the whole together in our imagination. Again, if it be too little, there arises no pleasure out of the object, it affords the view no stay: it is beheld and vanishes at once. As if we should look upon an ant or pismire, the parts fly the sight, and the whole considered is almost nothing. The same happens in action, which is the object of memory, as the body is of sight. Too vast oppresses the eyes, and exceeds the memory: too little scarce admits either.

Now, in every action it behoves the poet to know which is his utmost bound, how far with fitness, and a necessary proportion, he may produce, and determine it. That is, till either good fortune change into the worse, or the worse into the better. For, as a body without proportion cannot be goodly, no more can the action, either in *comedy*, or *tragedy*, without his fit bounds. And every bound, for the nature of the subject, is esteemed the best that is largest, till it can increase no more: so it behoves the action in *tragedy*, or *comedy*,

to be let grow, till the necessity ask a conclusion: wherein two things are to be considered; first, that it exceed not the compass of one day: next, that there be place left for digression, and art. For the episodes, and digressions in a fable, are the same that household stuff, and other furniture are in a house. And so far for the measure, and extent of a *fable dramatic*.

Now, that it should be one, and entire. One is considerable two ways: either, as it is only separate, and by itself; or as being composed of many parts, it begins to be one, as those parts grow, or are wrought together. That it should be one the first way alone, and by itself, no man that has tasted letters ever would say, especially having required before a just magnitude, and equal proportion of the parts in themselves. Neither of which can possibly be, if the action be single and separate, not composed of parts, which laid together in themselves, with an equal and fitting proportion, tend to the same end; which thing out of antiquity itself, has deceived many; and more this day it does deceive.

So many there be of old, that have thought the action of one man to be one; as of Hercules, Theseus, Achilles, Ulysses, and other heroes; which is both foolish and false; since by one and the same person many things may be severally done, which cannot fitly be referred, or joined to the same end. which not only the excellent tragic poets but the best masters of the epic, Homer, and Virgil saw. For, though the argument of an epic-poem be far more diffused, and poured out, than that of tragedy yet Virgil, writing of Aeneas, has pretermitted many things. He neither tells how he was born, how brought up; how he fought with Achilles; how he was snatched out of the battle by Venus; but that one thing, how he came into Italy, he prosecutes in twelve books. The rest of his journey, his error by sea, the sack of Troy, are put not as the argument of the work, but episodes of the argument. So Homer laid by many things of Ulysses and handled no more, than he saw tended to one and the same end.

Contrary to which and foolishly those poets did, whom the *philosopher* taxes; of whom one gathered all the actions of Theseus; another put all the labours of Hercules in one work. So did he, whom Juvenal mentions in the beginning, *hoarse Codrus*, that recited a volume compiled, which he called his *Thesoid*, not yet finished, to the great trouble both of his hearers and himself: amongst which there were many parts (that) had no coherence, nor kindred one with other, so far they were from being one action, one *fable*. For as a house, consisting of diverse materials, becomes one structure, and one dwelling; so an action, composed of diverse parts, may become one fable epic, or dramatic. For example, in a tragedy, look upon Sophocles's *Ajax*: Ajax deprived of Achilles's armour, which he hoped from the suffrage of the Greeks, disdains; and growing impatient of the injury, rages, and turns mad. In that humour he does many senseless things; and at last falls upon the Grecian flock, and kills a great Ram for Ulysses: returning to his sense, he grows ashamed of the scorn, and kills himself; and is by the chiefs of the Greeks forbidden burial. These things agree, and hand together, not as they

were done; but as seeming to be done, which made the action whole, entire, and absolute.

For the *whole*, as it consists of parts; so without all the parts it is not the whole; and to make it absolute, is required, not only the parts, but such parts as are true. For a part of the whole was true; which if you take away, you either change the whole, or it is not the whole. For, if it be such a part, as being present or absent, nothing concerns the whole, it cannot be called a part of the whole: and such are the episodes of which hereafter. For the present, here is one example; the single combat of Ajax with Hector, as it is at large described in Homer, nothing belongs to this Ajax of Sophocles.

You admire no *poems*, but such as run like a Brewer's cart upon the stones, hobling,

*Et, quæ per salebras, atque saxa cadunt.*  
*Actius, and quidquid Pacuviusque comunt.*  
*Attonitusque legis terrai, frugiferai.*

# FRANCIS BACON

## FROM *The Advancement of Learning*

### BOOK I

THERE BE therefore chiefly three vanities in studies, whereby learning has been most traduced. For those things we do esteem vain, which are either false or frivolous, those which either have no truth or no use: and those persons we esteem vain, which are either credulous or curious; and curiosity is either in matter or words: so that in reason, as well in experience, there fall out to be these three distemblers, as I may term them, of learning: the first, fantastical learning; the second, contentious learning; and the last, delicate learning; vain imaginations, vain altercations, and vain affectations; and with the last I will begin. Martin Luther, conducted no doubt by a higher providence, but in discourse of reason finding what a province he had undertaken against the bishop of Rome and the degenerate traditions of the church, and finding his own solitude, being no ways aided by the opinions of his own time, was enforced to awake all antiquity, and to call former times to his succours to make a party against the present time. So that the ancient authors, both in divinity and in humanity, which had long time slept in libraries, began generally to be read and revolved. Thus by consequence did draw on a necessity of a more exquisite travail in the languages original, wherein those authors did write, for the better understanding of those authors, and the better advantage of pressing and applying their words. And thereof grew again a delight in their manner of style and phrase, and an admiration of that kind of writing; which was much furthered and precipitated by the enmity and opposition that the propounders of those primitive but seeming new opinions had against the schoolmen; who were generally of the contrary part, and whose writings were altogether in a different style and form; taking liberty to coin and frame new terms of art to express their own sense, and to avoid circuit of speech, without regard to the pureness, pleasantness, and, as I may call it, lawfulness of the phrase or word. And again, because the great labour that then was with (of whom the Pharisees were wont to say, *Execrabilis ista turba, quae non novit legem*)<sup>1</sup> for the winning and persuading of them, there grew of necessity in chief price and request eloquence and variety of discourse, as the fittest and forciblest access into the capacity of the vulgar sort: so that these four causes concurring, the admiration of ancient authors, the hate of the schoolmen, the exact study of languages, and the efficiency of

<sup>1</sup> John vii, 10. The wretched crowd that has not the law.

preaching, did bring in an affectionate study of eloquence and copie<sup>2</sup> of speech, which then began to flourish. This grew speedily to an access; for men began to hunt more after words than matter; more after the choiceness of the phrase, and the round and clean composition of the sentence, and sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying illustration of their works with tropes and figures, than after the weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention or depth of judgement. Then grew the flowing and watery vein of Osorius<sup>3</sup> the Portugal bishop, to be in price. Then did Sturmius spend much infinite and curious pains upon Cicero the Orator, and Hermogenes the Rhetorician, besides his own books of Periods and Imitations. Then did Car of Cambridge, and Ascham with their lectures and writings almost deify Cicero and Demosthenes, and allure all young men that were studious, unto that delicate and polished kind of learning. Then did Erasmus take occasion to make the scoffing Echo: *Decem annos consumpsi in legendo Cicerone*;<sup>4</sup> and the Echo answered in Greek, *one, Asine*.<sup>5</sup> Then grew the learning of the schoolmen to be utterly despised as barbarous. In sum, the whole inclination and bent of those times was rather towards copie than weight.

Here, therefore, is the first distemper of learning, when men study words and not matter; whercof, though I have represented an example of late times, yet it has been and will be *secundum majus et minus*<sup>6</sup> in all time. And how is it possible but this should have an operation to discredit learning, even with vulgar capacities, when they see learned men's words like the first letter of a patent, or limned book; which though it has large flourishes, yet is but a letter? It seems to me that Pygmalion's<sup>7</sup> frenzy is a good emblem or portraiture of this vanity: for words are but the images of matter; and except they have life of reason and invention, to fall in love with them is all one as to fall in love with a picture.

But yet notwithstanding it is a thing not hastily to be condemned, to clothe and adorn the obscurity even of philosophy itself with sensible and plausible elocution. For hereof we have great examples of Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, and of Plato also in some degree; and hereof likewise there is great use: for surely, to the severe inquisition of truth and the deep progress into philosophy, it is some hindrance; because it is too early satisfactory to the mind of man, and quenches the desire of further search, before we come to a just period. But then if a man be to have any use of such knowledge in civil occasions, of conference, counsel, persuasion, discourse, or the like; then shall he find it prepared to his hands in those authors which write in that manner. But the excess of this is so justly contemptible that as Hercules, when he saw the image of Adonis, Venus' minion, in a temple, said in disdain, *Nil Sacri*

<sup>2</sup> "Copie," copiousness, rhetorical facility.      <sup>3</sup> Bishop of Silves, died 1580.

<sup>4</sup> I have spent ten years in reading Cicero.

<sup>5</sup> "One, Asine," The Greek Word "One" means "ass."

<sup>6</sup> More or less.      <sup>7</sup> Ovid, *Metam.* x, 243.

es;<sup>8</sup> so there is none of Hercules' followers in learning, that is, the more severe and laborious sort of inquirers into truth, but will despise those delicacies and affectations, as indeed capable of no divineness. And thus much of the first disease or distemper of learning. . . .

## BOOK II

Poesy is a part of learning in measure of words for the most part restrained. but in all other points extremely licensed, and does truly refer to the imagination; which, being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that which nature has severed, and sever that which nature has joined; and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things; *Pictoribus atque poetis, etc.*<sup>9</sup> It is taken in two senses in respect of words or matter; in the first sense it is but a character of style, and belongs to arts of speech, and is not pertinent for the present: in the latter it is, as has been said, one of the principal portions of learning, and is nothing else but *feigned history*, which may be style as well in prose as in verse.

The use of this *feigned history* has been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things does deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul; by reason whereof there is, agreeable to the spirit of man, a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more subtle variety, than can be found in the nature of things. Therefore, because the acts or events of *true history* have not that magnitude which satisfies the mind of man, poesy feigns acts and events greater and more heroical: because *true history* propounds successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence: because true history represents actions and events more ordinary, and less interchanged, therefore poesy endues them with more rareness, and more unexpected and alternative variations: so as it appears that poesy serves and confers to magnanimity, morality and to delectation. And therefore it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it does raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason does buckle and bow the mind into the nature of things. And we see, that by these insinuations and congruities with man's nature and pleasure, joined also with the agreement and comfort it has with music, it has had access and estimation in rude times and barbarous regions, where other learning stood excluded.

The division of poesy which is aptest in the propriety thereof (besides those divisions which are common unto it with history, as feigned chronicles, feigned lives, and the appendices of history, as feigned epistles, feigned orations, and the rest) is into *poesy narrative, representative, and allusive*. The

<sup>8</sup> Theocr. v, 2. "You are no divinity."

<sup>9</sup> Hor. *Ep. ad Pis.* 9.

*narrative* is a mere imitation of history, with the excesses before remembered: choosing for subject commonly wars and love, rarely state, and sometimes pleasure or mirth. *Representative* is as a visible history: and is an image of actions as if they were present, as history is of actions in nature as they are (that is) past. *Allusive* or *parabolical* is a *narrative* applied only to express some special purpose or conceit. Which later kind of parabolical wisdom was much more in use in the ancient times, as by the fables of Æsop, and the brief sentences of the Seven,<sup>10</sup> and the use of hieroglyphics may appear. And the cause was, for that it was then of necessity to express any point of reason which was more sharp or subtle than the vulgar in that manner, because men in those times wanted both variety of examples and subtilty of conceit. and as hieroglyphics were before letters, so parables were before arguments: and nevertheless now, and at all times, they do retain much life and vigour; because reason cannot be so sensible, nor examples so fit

But there remains yet another use of poesy parabolical opposite to that which we last mentioned: for that tends to demonstrate and illustrate that which is taught or delivered, and this other to retire and obscure it: that is, when the secrets and mysteries of religion, policy, or philosophy, are involved in fables or parables. Of this in divine poesy we see the use is authorized. In heathen poesy we see exposition of fables does fall out sometimes with great felicity; is in their war against the gods, the Earth their mother in revenge thereof brought forth Fame:

*Illam terra parens, ira irritata Deorum,  
Extremam, ut perhibent, Coeo Enceladique sororem  
Progeniit:*<sup>11</sup>

expounded, that when princes and monarchs have suppressed actual and open rebels, then the malignity of the people, which is the mother of rebellion, does bring forth libels and slanders and taxations of the state which is of the same kind with rebellion, but more feminine. So in the fable, that the rest of the gods having conspired to bind Jupiter, Pallas<sup>12</sup> called Briareus with his hundred hands to his aid: expounded, that monarchies need not fear any curbing of their absoluteness by mighty subjects, as long as by wisdom they keep the hearts of the people, who will be sure to come in on their side. So in the fable, that Achilles was brought up under Chiron the Centaur, who was part a man and part a beast, expounded ingeniously but corruptly by Machiavel,<sup>13</sup> that it belongs to the education and discipline of princes to know

<sup>10</sup> The maxims ascribed to the Seven Wise Men of the ancient world: Solon, Thales, Pittacus, Bias, Chilon, Cleobulus, and Periander.

<sup>11</sup> Her, as they tell, Mother Earth, when stung by wrath against the gods, bore last sister to Coeus and Enceladus. Virg. *Æn.* iv. 178-180.

<sup>12</sup> Not Pallas, but Thetis, Hom. *Il.* A. 401.

<sup>13</sup> Hom. *Il.* A. 831, and Machiav: *Prince*, C. 18.

as well how to play the part of the lion in violence, and the fox in guile, as of the man in virtue and justice. Nevertheless, in many the like encounters, I do rather think that the fable was first, and the exposition devised, than that the moral was first, and thereupon the fable framed. For I find it was an ancient vanity in Chrysippus, that troubled himself with great contention to fasten the assertions of the Stoics upon the fictions of the ancient poets; but yet that all the fables and fictions of the poets were but pleasure and not figure,<sup>14</sup> I interpose no opinion. Surely of those poets which are now extant, even Homer himself (notwithstanding he was made a kind of Scripture by the latter schools of Grecians), yet I should without any difficulty pronounce that his fables had no such inwardness in his own meaning; but what they might have upon a more original tradition, is not easy to affirm; for he was not the inventor of many of them.

In this third part of learning, which is poesy, I can report no deficiency. For being as a plant that comes of the lust of the earth, without a formal seed, it has sprung up and spread abroad more than any other kind. But to ascribe unto it that which is due, for the expressing of affections, passions, corruptions, and customs, we are beholding to poets more than to the philosophers' works; and for wit and eloquence not much less than to orator's harangues. But it is not good to stay too long in the theatre. Let us now pass on to the judicial place or palace of the mind, which we are to approach and view with more reverence. . . .

<sup>14</sup> "figure" Serious meaning expressed in figurative language.



# JOHN MILTON

## THE VERSE

### PREFIXED TO *Paradise Lost*

THE MEASURE is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin; rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause therefore some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rhyme both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious cares, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings, a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming.

## OF THAT SORT OF DRAMATIC POEM WHICH IS CALLED TRAGEDY

### PREFIXED TO *Samson Agonistes*

TRAGEDY, as it was anciently composed, has been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so in physic things of melancholic hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humours. Hence philosophers and other gravest writers, as Cicero, Plutarch and others, frequently cite out of tragic poets, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. The Apostle

Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides into the Text of Holy Scripture, I Cor. 15. 33. and *Paræus* commenting on the *Revelation*, divides the whole book as a tragedy, into acts distinguished each by a chorus of heavenly harpings and song between. Heretofore men in highest dignity have laboured not a little to be thought able to compose a tragedy. Of that honour Dionysius the elder was no less ambitious, than before of his attaining to the tyranny. Augustus Caesar also had begun his *Ajax*, but unable to please his own judgement with what he had begun, left it unfinished. Seneca the philosopher is by some thought the author of those tragedies (at least the best of them) that go under that name. Gregory Nazianzen a Father of the Church, thought it not unbecoming the sanctity of his person to write a tragedy, which he entitled, *Christ Suffering*. This is mentioned to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day with other common interludes; happening through the poet's error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons, which by all judicious has been counted absurd; and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people. And though ancient tragedy use no prologue, yet using sometimes, in case of self defence, or explanation, that which Martial calls an epistle; in behalf of this tragedy coming forth after the ancient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much beforehand may be epistled, that chorus is here introduced after the Greek manner, not ancient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians. In the modelling therefore of this poem, with good reason, the ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of verse used in the chorus is of all sorts, called by the Greeks *Monostrophic*, or rather *Apolelymenon*, without regard had to *Strophe*, *Antistrophe* or *Epod*, which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the music, then used with the chorus that sung; not essential to the poem, and therefore not material; or being divided into stanzas or pauses, they may be called *Allæostrophæ*. Division into act and scene referring chiefly to the stage (to which this work never was intended) is here omitted.

It suffices if the whole drama be found not produced beyond the fifth act, of the style and uniformity, and that commonly called the plot, whether intricate or explicit, which is nothing indeed but such economy, or disposition of the fable as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum; they only will best judge who are not unacquainted with Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the three tragic poets unequalled yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write tragedy. The circumscription of time wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is according to ancient rule, and best example, within the space of 24 hours.

# JOHN DRYDEN

## AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY

1668

IT WAS that memorable day, in the first summer of the late war, when our navy engaged the Dutch; a day wherein the two most mighty and best appointed fleets which any age had ever seen, disputed the command of the greater half of the globe, the commerce of nations, and the riches of the universe: while these vast floating bodies, on either side, moved against each other in parallel lines, and our countrymen, under the happy conduct of his Royal Highness, went breaking, by little and little, into the line of the enemies; the noise of the cannon from both navies reached our ears about the City, so that all men being alarmed with it, and in a dreadful suspense of the event, which they knew was then deciding, everyone went following the sound as his fancy led him; and leaving the town almost empty, some took towards the park, some cross the river, others down it; all seeking the noise in the depth of silence.

Among the rest, it was the fortune of Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander, to be in company together; three of them persons whom their wit and quality have made known to all the town; and whom I have chosen to hide under these borrowed names, that they may not suffer by so ill a relation as I am going to make of their discourse.

Taking then a barge, which a servant of Lisideius had provided for them, they made haste to shoot the bridge, and left behind them that great fall of waters which hindered them from hearing what they desired: after which, having disengaged themselves from many vessels which rode at anchor in the Thames, and almost blocked up the passage towards Greenwich, they ordered the watermen to let fall their oars more gently; and then, every one favouring his own curiosity with a strict silence, it was not long ere they perceived the air to break about them like the noise of distant thunder, or of swallows in a chimney: those little undulations of sound, though almost vanishing before they reached them, yet still seeming to retain somewhat of their first horror, which they had betwixt the fleets. After they had attentively listened till such time as the sound by little and little went from them, Eugenius, lifting up his head, and taking notice of it, was the first who congratulated to the rest that happy omen of our Nation's victory: adding, that we had but this to desire in confirmation of it, that we might hear no more of that noise, which was now leaving the English coast. When the rest had concurred in the same opinion, Crites, a person of a sharp judgement, and somewhat too delicate a taste in wit, which the world have mistaken in him for ill-nature, said, smiling

to us, that if the concernment of this battle had not been so exceedingly great, he could scarce have wished the victory at the price he knew he must pay for it, in being subject to the reading and hearing of so many ill verses as he was sure would be made on that subject. Adding, that no argument could escape some of those eternal rhymers, who watch a battle with more diligence than the ravens and birds of prey; and the worst of them surest to be first in upon the quarry: while the better able, either out of modesty write not at all, or set that due value upon their poems, as to let them be often desired and long expected. "There are some of those impertinent people of whom you speak," answered Lisideius, "who to my knowledge are already so provided, either way, that they can produce not only a Panegyric upon the victory, but, if need be, a Funeral Elegy on the Duke; wherein, after they have crowned his valour with many laurels, they will at last deplore the odds under which he fell, concluding that his courage deserved a better destiny." All the company smiled at the concept of Lisideius; but Crites, more eager than before, began to make particular exceptions against some writers, and said, the public magistrate ought to send betimes to forbid them; and that it concerned the peace and quiet of all honest people, that ill poets should be as well silenced as seditious preachers. "In my opinion," replied Eugenius, "you pursue your point too far; for as to my own particular, I am so great a lover of poesy, that I could wish them all rewarded who attempt but to do well; at least, I would not have them worse used than one of their brethren was by Sylla the Dictator: *Quem in concione vidimus* (says Tully), *cum ei libellum malus poeta de populo subjecisset, quod epigramma in eum fecisset tantummodo alternis versibus longiusculis, statim ex iis rebus quas tunc vendebat jubere ei prae-mium tribui, sub ea conditione ne quid postea scriberet.*"<sup>1</sup> "I could wish with all my heart," replied Crites, "that many whom we know were as bountifully thanked upon the same condition—that they would never trouble us again. For amongst others, I have a mortal apprehension of two poets, whom this victory, with the help of both her wings, will never be able to escape." "'Tis easy to guess whom you intend," said Lisideius; "and without naming them, I ask you, if one of them does not perpetually pay us with clenches upon words, and a certain clownish kind of railery? If now and then he does not offer at a catachresis or Clevelandism, wresting and torturing a word into another meaning: in fine, if he be not one of those whom the French would call *un mauvais buffon*; one who is so much a well-willer to the satire, that he intends at least to spare no man; and though he cannot strike a blow to hurt any, yet he ought to be punished for the malice of the action, as our witches are justly hanged, because they think themselves to be such; and

<sup>1</sup> "We may note that in a gathering once, when a bad poet handed up to him, from the concourse of people, a book in which he had composed elegiacs on the general, he promptly ordered the poet to be given, out of what was then being sold (the plunders of war), a reward, on the condition that he not afterwards write anything." Cicero, *Pro Archia* 10, 25.

suffer deservedly for believing they did mischief, because they meant it." "You have described him," said Crites, "so exactly, that I am afraid to come after you with my other extremity of poetry. He is one of those who, having had some advantage of education and converse, knows better than the other what a poet should be, but puts it into practice more unluckily than any man; his style and matter are everywhere alike: he is the most calm, peaceable writer you ever read: he never disquiets your passions with the least concernment, but still leaves you in as even a temper as he found you; he is a very Leveller in poetry: he creeps along with ten little words in every line, and helps out his numbers with *for to*, and *unto*, and all the pretty expletives he can find, till he drags them to the end of another line; while the sense is left tired half way behind it: he doubly starves all his verses, first for want of thought, and then of expression; his poetry neither has wit in it, nor seems to have it; like him in Martial:

*Pauper videri Cinna vult, et est pauper.*<sup>2</sup>

"He affects plainness, to cover his want of imagination: when he writes the serious way, the highest flight of his fancy is some miserable antithesis, or seeming contradiction; and in the comic he is still reaching at some thin conceit, the ghost of a jest, and that too flies before him, never to be caught; these swallows which we see before us on the Thames are the just resemblance of his wit: you may observe how near the water they stoop, how many proffers they make to dip, and yet how seldom they touch it; and when they do, it is but the surface: they skim over it but to catch a gnat, and then mount into the air and leave it."

"Well, gentlemen," said Eugenius, "you may speak your pleasure of these authors; but though I and some few more about the town may give you a peaceable hearing, yet assure yourselves, there are multitudes who would think you malicious and them injured: especially him whom you first described; he is the very Withers of the city: they have bought more editions of his works than would serve to lay under all their pies at the Lord Mayor's Christmas. When his famous poem first came out in the year 1660, I have seen them reading it in the midst of 'Change time; nay so vehement they were at it, that they lost their bargain by the candles' ends; but what will you say if he has been received amongst great persons? I can assure you he is, this day, the envy of one who is lord in the art of quibbling, and who does not take it well that any man should intrude so far into his province." "All I would wish," replied Crites, "is, that they who love his writings, may still admire him, and his fellow poet: *Jui Bavium non odit, etc.*,<sup>3</sup> is curse sufficient." "And farther," added Lisideus, "I believe there is no man who writes well, but would think he had hard measure, if their admirers should praise anything of

<sup>2</sup> "He wishes to appear a pauper, does Cinna: and he is a pauper." *Martial* viii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> "Who does not hate Bavius." *Virgin, Eclogues* III. 90.

his: *Nam quos contemnimus, eorum quoque laudes contemnimus.*"<sup>4</sup> "There are so few who write well in this age," says Crites, "that methinks any praises should be welcome; they neither rise to the dignity of the last age, nor to any of the ancients: and we may cry out of the writers of this time, with more reason than Petronius of his, *Pace vestrâ liceat dixisse, primorum eloquentiam perdidistis:*"<sup>5</sup> you have debauched the true old poetry so far, that Nature, which is the soul of it, is not in any of your writings."

"If your quarrel," said Eugenius, "to those who now write, be grounded only on your reverence to antiquity, there is no man more ready to adore those great Greeks and Romans than I am: but on the other side, I cannot think so contemptibly of the age in which I live, or so dishonourably of my own country, as not to judge we equal the Ancients in most kinds of poesy, and in some surpass them; neither know I any reason why I may not be as zealous for the reputation of our age as we find the Ancients themselves were in reference to those who lived before them. For you hear your Horace saying,

*Indignor quidquam reprehendi, non quia crassè  
Compositum, illepidève putetur, sed quia nuper.*<sup>6</sup>

And after:

*Si meliora dies, ut vina, poemata reddit,  
Scire velim, pretium chartis quotus arroget annus?*<sup>7</sup>

"But I see I am engaging in a wide dispute, where the arguments are not like to reach close on either side; for poesy is of so large an extent, and so many both of the Ancients and Moderns have done well in all kinds of it, that in citing one against the other, we shall take up more time this evening than each man's occasions will allow him: therefore I would ask Crites to what part of poesy he would confine his arguments, and whether he would defend the general cause of the Ancients against the Moderns, or oppose any age of the Moderns against this of ours?"

Crites, a little while considering upon this demand, told Eugenius, that if he pleased, he would limit their dispute to Dramatic Poesy; in which he thought it not difficult to prove, either that the Ancients were superior to the Moderns, or the last age of this of ours.

Eugenius was somewhat surprised, when he heard Crites make choice of that subject. "For ought I see," said he, "I have undertaken a harder province than I imagined: for though I never judged the plays of the Greek or Roman

<sup>4</sup> "For we despise the praise of people whom we despise."

<sup>5</sup> "By your leave, let me say that you were the first to lose that eloquence, which all before you had had." Petronius, *Satyr.* 2. .

<sup>6</sup> "My indignation rises when any piece is censured not because it is considered written without clarity or wit, but simply because it is recent." Horace, *Epist.* II. i. 76.

<sup>7</sup> "If time betters books, like wines, let me ask what year of their age bestows value upon them?" *Ibid.* 34.

poets comparable to ours, yet, on the other side, those we now see acted come short of many which were written in the last age: but my comfort is, if we are overcome, it will be only by our own countrymen: and if we yield to them in this one part of poesy, we more surpass them in all the other: for in the epic or lyric way, it will be hard for them to show us one such amongst them, as we have many now living, or who lately were: they can produce nothing so courtly written, or which expresses so much the conversation of a gentleman, as Sir John Suckling, nothing so even, sweet, and flowing as Mr. Waller, nothing so majestic, so correct, as Sir John Denham; nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit as Mr. Cowley; as for the Italian, French, and Spanish plays, I can make it evident, that those who now write surpass them; and that the drama is wholly ours "

All of them were thus far of Eugenius his opinion, that the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers; even Crites himself did not much oppose it; and everyone was willing to acknowledge how much our poesy is improved by the happiness of some writers yet living, who first taught us to mould our thoughts into easy and significant words—to retrench the superfluities of expression—and to make our rhyme so properly a part of the verse, that it should never mislead the sense, but itself be led and governed by it

Eugenius was going to continue this discourse, when Lisideus told him that it was necessary, before they proceeded further, to take a standing measure of their controversy; for how was it possible to be decided who wrote the best plays, before we know what a play should be? But, this once agreed on by both parties, each might have recourse to it, either to prove his own advantages, or to discover the failings of his adversary.

He had no sooner said this, but all desired the favour of him to give the definition of a play; and they were the more importunate, because neither Aristotle, nor Horace, nor any other, who had written of that subject, had ever done it

Lisideus, after some modest denials, at last confessed he had a rude notion of it; indeed, rather a description than a definition; but which served to guide him in his private thoughts, when he was to make a judgement of what others wrote: that he conceived a play ought to be, *a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.*

This definition, though Crites raised a logical objection against it—that it was only *a genere et sine*,<sup>3</sup> and so not altogether perfect, was yet well received by the rest; and after they had given order to the watermen to turn their

<sup>3</sup> That is set forth only "by general classification and by purpose," without sufficient *differentia*. "The description might be used of a narrative poem, or of a novel, as well as of a play. Dryden thought that the specific difference between drama and narrative was not likely to be mistaken, and was therefore of less importance than the points here described." (W. P. Ker, note in *Essays of John Dryden*.)

barge, and row softly, that they might take the cool of the evening in their return, Crites, being desired by the company to begin, spoke on behalf of the Ancients, in this manner :

"If confidence presage a victory, Eugenius, in his own opinion, has already triumphed over the Ancients : nothing seems more easy to him, than to overcome those whom it is our greatest praise to have imitated well; for we do not only build upon their foundations, but by their models. Dramatic poesy had time enough, reckoning from Thespis (who first invented it) to Aristophanes, to be born, to grow up, and to flourish in maturity. It has been observed of arts and sciences, that in one and the same century they have arrived to great perfection; and no wonder, since every age has a kind of universal genius, which inclines those that live in it to some particular studies: the work then, being pushed on by many hands, must of necessity go forward.

"Is it not evident, in these last hundred years (when the study of philosophy has been the business of all the Virtuosi in Christendom), that almost a new nature has been revealed to us? That more errors of the school have been detected, more useful experiments in philosophy have been made, more noble secrets in optics, medicine, anatomy, astronomy discovered, than in all those credulous and doting ages from Aristotle to us?—so true it is, that nothing spreads more fast than science, when rightly and generally cultivated.

"Add to this, the more than common emulation that was in those times of writing well; which though it be found in all ages and all persons that pretend to the same reputation, yet poesy, being then in more esteem than now it is, had greater honours decreed to the professors of it, and consequently the rivalry was more high between them; they had judges ordained to decide their merit, and prizes to reward it; and historians have been diligent to record of Eschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Lycophron, and the rest of them, both who they were that vanquished in these wars of the theatre, and how often they were crowned: while the Asian kings and Grecian commonwealths scarce afforded them a nobler subject than the unmanly luxuries of a debauched court, or giddy intrigues of a factious city: *Alit aemulatio ingenia* (says Paterculus), *et nunc invidia, nunc admiratio incitatio nem accendit*: Emulation is the spur of wit; and sometimes envy, sometimes admiration, quickens our endeavours.

"But now, since the rewards of honour are taken away, that virtuous emulation is turned into direct malice; yet so slothful, that it contents itself to condemn and cry down others, without attempting to do better: it is a reputation too unprofitable, to take the necessary pains for it; yet, wishing they had it, that desire is incitement enough to hinder others from it. And this, in short, Eugenius, is the reason why you have now so few good poets, and so many severe judges. Certainly, to imitate the Ancients well, much labour and long study is required; which pains, I have already shown, our poets would want encouragement to take, if yet they had ability to go through the work. Those Ancients have been faithful imitators and wise observers of that nature which is so torn and ill represented in our plays; they have



handed down to us a perfect resemblance of her ; which we, like ill copiers, neglecting to look on, have rendered monstrous, and disfigured. But, that you may know how much you are indebted to those your masters, and be ashamed to have so ill required them, I must remember you, that all the rules by which we practise the drama at this day (either such as relate to the justness and symmetry of the plot, or the episodical ornaments, such as descriptions, narrations, and other beauties, which are not essential to the play) were delivered to us from the observations which Aristotle made, of those poets, who either lived before him, or were his contemporaries : we have added nothing of our own, except we have the confidence to say our wit is better ; or which, none boast in this our age, but such as understand not theirs. Of that book which Aristotle has left us, *περὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς*, Horace his *Art of Poetry* is an excellent comment, and, I believe, restores to us that Second Book of his concerning *Comedy*, which is wanting in him

"Out of these two have been extracted the famous Rules, which the French call *Des Trois Unitez*, or The Three Unities, which ought to be observed in every regular play ; namely, of Time, Place and Action.

"The Unity of Time they comprehend in twenty-four hours, the compass of a natural day, or as near as it can be contrived ; and the reason of it is obvious to everyone—that the time of the feigned action, or fable of the play, should be proportioned as near as can be to the duration of that time in which it is represented : since, therefore, all plays are acted on the theatre in the space of time much within the compass of twenty-four hours, that play is to be thought the nearest imitation of nature, whose plot or action is confined within that time, and, by the same rule which concludes this general proportion of time, it follows, that all the parts of it are (as near as may be) to be equally subdivided ; namely, that one act take not up the supposed time of half a day, which is out of proportion to the rest ; since the other four are then to be straitened within the compass of the remaining half ; for 't is unnatural that one act, which beings spoke or written is not longer than the rest, should be supposed longer by the audience, it is therefore the poet's duty, to take care that no act should be imagined to exceed the time in which it is represented on the stage, and that the intervals and inequalities of time be supposed to fall out between the acts

"This rule of time, how well it has been observed by the Ancients, most of their plays will witness, you see them in their tragedies (wherein to follow this rule is certainly most difficult), from the very beginning of their plays, falling close into that part of the story which they intend for the action or principal object of it, leaving the former part to be delivered by narration : so that they set the audience, as it were, at the post where the race is to be concluded ; and, saving them the tedious expectation of seeing the poet set out and ride the beginning of the course, they suffer you not to behold him, till he is in sight of the goal, and just upon you

"For the second Unity, which is that of Place, the Ancients meant by it, that the scene ought to be continued through the play, in the same place

where it was laid in the beginning: for, the stage on which it is represented being but one and the same place, it is unnatural to conceive it many—and those far distant from one another. I will not deny but, by the variation of painted scenes, the fancy, which in these cases will contribute to its own deceit, may sometimes imagine it several places, with some appearance of probability; yet it still carries the greater likelihood of truth if those places be supposed so near each other as in the same town or city; which may all be comprehended under the larger denomination of one place; for a greater distance will bear no proportion to the shortness of time which is allotted, in the acting, to pass from one of them to another; for the observation of this, next to the Ancients, the French are to be most commended. They tie themselves so strictly to the Unity of Place that you never see in any of their plays a scene changed in the middle of an act: if the act begins in a garden, a street, or chamber, 'tis ended in the same place; and that you may know it to be the same, the stage is so supplied with persons, that it is never empty all the time: he who enters second, has business with him who was on before; and before the second quits the stage, a third appears who has business with him. This Corneille calls *la liaison des scenes*, the continuity of joining of the scenes; and 'tis a good mark of a well-contrived play, when all the persons are known to each other, and every one of them has some affairs with all the rest.

"As for the third Unity, which is that of Action, the Ancients meant no other by it than what the logicians do by their *finis*, the end or scope of any action; that which is the first in intention, and last in execution: now the poet is to aim at one great and complete action, to the carrying on of which all things in his play, even the very obstacles, are to be subservient; and the reason of this is as evident as any of the former. For two actions, equally laboured and driven on by the writer, would destroy the unity of the poem. It would be not longer one play, but two: not but that there may be many actions in a play, as Ben Jonson has observed in his *Discoveries*; but they must be all subservient to the great one, which our language happily expresses in the name of *under-plots*: such as in Terence's *Eunuch* is the difference and reconcilment of Thais and Phaedria, which is not the chief business of the play, but promotes the marriage of Chaerea and Chremes's sister, principally intended by the poet. There ought to be but one action, says Corneille, that is, one complete action, which leaves the mind of the audience in a full repose; but this cannot be brought to pass but by many other imperfect actions, which conduce to it, and hold the audience in a delightful suspense of what will be.

"If by these rules (to omit many other drawn from the precepts and practice of the Ancients) we should judge our modern plays, 'tis probable that few of them would endure the trial: that which should be the business of a day, takes up in some of them an age; instead of one action, they are the epitomes of a man's life; and for one spot of ground, which the stage should represent, we are sometimes in more countries than the map can show us.

"But if we allow the Ancients to have contrived well, we must acknowledge them to have written better. Questionless we are deprived of a great stock of wit in the loss of Menander among the Greek poets, and of Caecilius, Afranius, and Varius, among the Romans; we may guess at Menander's excellency by the plays of Terence, who translated some of his; and yet wanted so much of him, that he was called by C. Caesar the half-Menander; and may judge of Varius, by the testimonies of Horace, Martial, and Velleius Paterculus. 'Tis probable that these, could they be recovered, would decide the controversy; but so long as Aristophanes and Plautus are extant, while the tragedies of Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca, are in our hands, I can never see one of those plays which are now written but it increases my admiration of the Ancients. And yet I must acknowledge further, that to admire them as we ought, we should understand them better than we do. Doubtless many things appear flat to us, the wit of which depended on some custom or story, which never came to our knowledge, or perhaps on some criticism in their language, which being so long dead, and only remaining in their books, 'tis not possible they should make us understand perfectly. To read Macrobius, explaining the propriety and elegancy of many words in Virgil, which I had before passed over without consideration as common things, is enough to assure me that I ought to think the same of Terence, and that in the purity of his style (which Tully so much valued that he ever carried his work about him), there is yet left in him great room for admiration, if I knew but where to place it. In the meantime I must desire you to take notice that the greatest man of the last age (Ben Jonson) was willing to give place to them in all things: he was not only a professed imitator of Horace, but a learned plagiarist of all the others, you track him everywhere in their snow: if Horace, Lucan, Petronius Arbitrator, Seneca, and Juvenal, had their own from him, there are few serious thoughts which are new in him: you will pardon me, therefore, if I presume he loved their fashion, when he wore their clothes. But since I have otherwise a great veneration for him, and you, Eugenius, prefer him above all other poets, I will use no farther argument to you than his example: I will produce before you Father Ben, dressed in all the ornaments and colours of the Ancients; you will need no other guide to our party, if you follow him; and whether you consider the bad plays of our age, or regard the good plays of the last, both the best and worst of the modern poets will equally instruct you to admire the Ancients."

Crites had no sooner left speaking, but Eugenius, who had waited with some impatience for it, thus began:

"I have observed in your speech, that the former part of it is convincing as to what the Moderns have profited by the rules of the Ancients; but in the latter you are careful to conceal how much they have excelled them; we own all the helps we have from them, and want neither veneration nor gratitude, while we acknowledge that, to overcome them, we must make use of the advantages as we have received from them: but to these assistances we have joined our own industry; for, had we sat down with a dull imitation of them,

we might then have lost somewhat of the old perfection, but never acquired any that was new. We draw not therefore after their lines, but those of Nature; and having the life before us, besides the experience of all they knew, it is no wonder if we hit some airs and features which they have missed. I deny not what you urge of arts and sciences, that they have flourished in some ages more than others; but your instance in philosophy makes for me: for if natural causes be more known now than in the time of Aristotle, because more studied, it follows that poesy and other arts may, with the same pains, arrive still nearer to perfection; and, that granted, it will rest for you to prove that they wrought more perfect images of human life than we; which seeing in your discourse you have avoided to make good, it shall now be my task to show you some part of their defects, and some few excellencies of the Moderns. And I think there is none among us can imagine I do it enviously, or with purpose to detract from them; for what interest of fame or profit can the living lose by the reputation of the dead? On the other side, it is a great truth which Velleius Paterculus affirms: *Audita visis libentius laudamus; et præsentia invidia præterita admiratione prosequimur; et his nos obrui, illis instrui credimus*:<sup>9</sup> that praise or censure is certainly the most sincere, which unbribed posterity shall give us.

"Be pleased then in the first place to take notice that the Greek poesy, which Crites has affirmed to have arrived to perfection in the reign of the Old Comedy, was so far from it that the distinction of it into acts was not known to them; or if it were, it is yet so darkly delivered to us that we cannot make it out.

"All we know of it is from the singing of their chorus; and that too is so uncertain, that in some of their plays we have reason to conjecture they sung more than five times. Aristotle indeed divides the integral parts of a play into four. First, the *Protasis*, or entrance, which gives light only to the characters of the persons, and proceeds very little into any part of the action. Secondly, the *Epitasis*, or working up of the plot; where the play grows warmer, the design or action of it is drawing on, and you see something promising that it will come to pass. Thirdly, the *Catastasis*, called by the Romans, *Status*, the height and full growth of the play: we may call it properly the counterturn, which destroys that expectation, imbroils the action in new difficulties, and leaves you far distant from that hope in which it found you; as you may have observed in a violent stream resisted by a narrow passage—it runs round to an eddy, and carries back the waters with more swiftness than it brought them on. Lastly, the *Catastrophe*, which the Grecians called *λυσις*, the French *le dénouement*, and we the discovery, or unravelling of the plot: there you see all things settling again upon their first foundations; and, the obstacles which hindered the design or action of the play once removed, it ends with that

<sup>9</sup> "We praise things heard more freely than things seen; and we accompany envy for the present with admiration for the past; we believe ourselves oppressed by the former and by the latter strengthened."

resemblance of truth and nature, that the audience are satisfied with the conduct of it. Thus this great man delivered to us the image of a play; and I must confess it is so lively, that from thence much light has been derived to the forming it more perfectly into acts and scenes: but what poet first limited to five the number of the acts, I know not; only we see it so firmly established in the time of Horace, that he gives it for a rule in comedy—*Neu brevior quinto, neu sit productior actu*.<sup>10</sup> So that you see the Grecians cannot be said to have consummated this art; writing rather by entrances than by acts, and having rather a general indigested notion of a play, than knowing how and where to bestow the particular graces of it.

"But since the Spaniards at this day allow but three acts, which they call *Jornadas*, to a play, and the Italians in many of theirs follow them, when I condemn the Ancients, I declare it is not altogether because they have not five acts as to every play, but because they have not confined themselves to one certain number: it is building an house without a model; and when they succeeded in such undertakings, they ought to have sacrificed to fortune, not to the muses.

"Next, for the plot, which Aristotle called τὸ μῦθος, and often τῶν πραγμάτων σύνθεσις,<sup>11</sup> and from him the Romans *Fabula*; it has already been judiciously observed by a later writer, that in their tragedies it was only some tale derived from Thebes or Troy, or at least something that happened in those two ages; which was worn so threadbare by the pens of all the epic poets, and even by tradition, itself of the talkative Greeklings (as Ben Jonson calls them), that before it came upon the stage it was already known to all the audience; and the people, so soon as ever they heard the name of Oedipus, knew as well as the poet, that he had killed his father by a mistake, and committed incest with his mother, before the play; that they were now to hear of a great plague, an oracle, and the ghost of Laius; so that they sat with a yawning kind of expectation, till he was to come with his eyes pulled out, and speak a hundred or more verses in a tragic tone, in complaint of his misfortunes. But one Oedipus, Hercules, or Medea, had been tolerable: poor people, they escaped not so good cheap; they had still the *chapon bouille*<sup>12</sup> set before them, till their appetites were cloyed with the same dish, and, the novelty being gone, the pleasure vanished; so that one main end of dramatic poesy in its definition, which was to cause delight, was of consequence destroyed.

"In their comedies, the Romans generally borrowed their plots from the Greek poets; and theirs was commonly a little girl stolen or wandered from her parents, brought back unknown to the city, there (falling into the hands of) some young fellow, who, by the help of his servant, cheats his father; and when her time comes, to cry—*Juno Lucina, fer opem*<sup>13</sup>—one or other sees a

<sup>10</sup> "Let it be neither shorter nor longer than five acts." Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 189.

<sup>11</sup> Lit., "the placing together of the actions"      <sup>12</sup> (Fr.) "sop of bread."

<sup>13</sup> "O Juno, goddess of childbirth, help me." Terence, *Andr*, III, i.

little box or cabinet which was carried away with her, and so discovers her to her friends, if some god do not prevent it, by coming down in a machine, and taking the thanks of it to himself.

"By the plot you may guess much of the characters of the persons. An old father, who would willingly, before he dies, see his son well married; his debauched son, kind in his nature to his mistress, but miserably in want of money; a servant or slave, who has so much wit to strike in with him, and help to dupe his father; a braggadocio captain, a parasite, and a lady of pleasure.

"As for the poor honest maid, on whom the story is built, and who ought to be one of the principal actors in the play, she is commonly a mute in it: she has the breeding of the old Elizabeth way, which was for maids to be seen and not to be heard; and it is enough you know she is willing to be married, when fifth act requires it.

"These are plots built after the Italian mode of houses—you see through them all at once: the characters are indeed the imitation of nature, but so narrow, as if they had imitated only an eye or a hand, and did not dare to venture on the lines of a face, or the proportion of a body.

"But in how strait a compass soever they have bounded their plots and characters, we will pass it by, if they have regularly pursued them, and perfectly observed those three Unities of Time, Place, and Action; the knowledge of which you say is derived to us from them. But in the first place give me leave to tell you, that the Unity of Place, however it might be practised by them, was never any of their rules; we neither find it in Aristotle, Horace, or any who have written of it, till in our age the French poets first made it a precept of the stage. The Unity of Time, even Terence himself, who was the best and most regular of them, has neglected: his *Heautontimorontos*, or Self-Punisher, takes up visibly two days, says Scaliger; the two first acts concluding the first day, the three last the day ensuing; and Euripides, in tying himself to one day, has committed an absurdity never to be forgiven him; for in one of his tragedies he has made Theseus go from Athens to Thebes, which was about forty English miles, under the walls of it to give battle, and appear victorious in the next act; and yet, from the time of his departure to the return of the Nuntius, who gives the relation of his victory, Aethra and the Chorus have but thirty-six verses; which is not for every mile a verse.

"The like error is as evident in Terence his *Eunuch*, when Laches, the old man, enters by mistake into the house of Thais; where, betwixt his exit and the entrance of Pythias, who comes to give ample relation of the disorders he has raised within, Parmeno, who was left upon the stage, has not above five lines to speak. *C'est bien employer un temps si court*,<sup>14</sup> says the French poet, who furnished me with one of the observations: and almost all their tragedies will afford us examples of the like nature

<sup>14</sup> "It is well to employ so short a time." Corneille, *Troisième Discours*.

"It is true, they have kept the continuity, or, as you called it, *liaison des scenes*, somewhat better: two do not perpetually come in together, talk, and go out together; and other two succeed them, and do the same throughout the act, which the English call by the name of single scenes; but the reason is, because they have seldom above two or three scenes, properly so called, in every act; for it is to be accounted a new scene, not only every time the stage is empty; but every person who enters, though to others, makes it so; because he introduces a new business. Now the plots of their plays being narrow, and the persons few, one of their acts was written in a less compass than one of our well-wrought scenes, and yet they are often deficient even in this. To go no further than Terence, you find in the *Eunuch*, Antipho entering single in the midst of the third act, after Cremes and Pythias were gone off; in the same play you have likewise Dorias beginning the fourth act alone; and after she had made a relation of what was done at the Soldier's entertainment (which by the way was very inartificial, because she was presumed to speak directly to the audience, and to acquaint them with what was necessary to be known, but yet should have been so contrived by the poet as to have been told by persons of the drama to one another, and so by them to have come to the knowledge of the people), she quits the stage. and Phaedria enters next, alone likewise: he also gives you an account of himself, and of his returning from the country, in monologue, to which unnatural way of narration Terence is subject in all his plays. In his *Adelphi*, or Brothers, Syrus and Demea enter after the scene was broken by the departure of Sostrata, Geta, and Canthara; and indeed you can scarce look unto any of his comedies, where you will not presently discover the same interruption.

"But as they have failed both in laying of their plots, and in the management, swerving from the rules of their own art by misrepresenting nature to us, in which they have ill-satisfied one intention of a play, which was delight; so in the instructive part they have erred worse; instead of punishing vice and rewarding virtue, they have often shewn a prosperous wickedness, and an unhappy piety: they have set before us a bloody image of revenge in Medea, and given her dragons to convey her safe from punishment; a Priam and Astyanax murdered, and Cassandra ravished, and the lust and murder ending in the victory of him who acted them: in short, there is no indecorum in any of our modern plays, which if I would excuse, I could not shadow with some authority from the Ancients

"And one farther note of them let me leave you: tragedies and comedies were not written then as they are now, promiscuously, by the same person; but he who found his genius bending to the one, never attempted the other way. This is so plain, that I need not instance to you, that Aristophanes, Plautus, Terence, never any of them writ a tragedy; Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca, never meddled with comedy: the sock and buskin were not worn by the same poet. Having then so much care to excel in one kind, very little is to be pardoned them, if they miscarried in it; and this would lead me to the consideration of their wit, had not Crites given me sufficient warning not

to be too bold in my judgement of it; because, the languages being dead, and many of the customs and little accidents on which it depended lost to us, we are not competent judges of it. But though I grant that here and there we may miss the application of a proverb or a custom, yet a thing well said will be wit in all languages; and though it may lose something in the translation, yet to him who reads it in the original, 'tis still the same: he has an idea of its excellency, though it cannot pass from his mind into any other expression or words than those in which he finds it. When Phaedria, in the *Eunuch*, had a command from his mistress to be absent two days, and, encouraging himself to go through with it, said, *Tandem ego non illa caream, si sit opus, vel totum triduum?*<sup>15</sup>—Parmeno, to mock the softness of his master, lifting up his hands and eyes, cries out, as it were in admiration, *Hui! universum triduum!*<sup>16</sup> the elegancy of which *universum*, though it cannot be rendered in our language, yet leaves an impression on our souls: but this happens seldom in him; in Plautus oftener, who is infinitely too bold in his metaphors and coining words, out of which many times his wit is nothing; which questionless was one reason why Horace falls upon him so severely in those verses:

*Sed proavi nostri Plautinos et numeros et  
Laudavere sales, nimum patienter utrumque,  
Ne dicam stolidè.*<sup>17</sup>

For Horace himself was cautious to obtrude a new word on his readers, and makes custom and common use the best measure of receiving it into our writings:

*Multa renascentur quoe nunc cecidere, cadentique  
Quoe nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,  
Quem penes arbitrium est, et jus, et norma loquendi.*<sup>18</sup>

"The not observing this rule is that which the world has blamed in our satirist, Cleveland: to express a thing hard and unnaturally, is his new way of elocution. 'Tis true, no poet but may sometimes use a catachresis: Virgil does it—

*Mistaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho*—<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "Shall I not do without her, if there be need of it, even for three days?" *Eunuchus* II, i, 18.   <sup>16</sup> "Alas, the entirety of three days." *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Incorrectly quoted from Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 270–72. "But our forefathers praised both the numbers and witticisms of Plautus; too tolerantly, I will not say stupidly, admiring (*mirati*) each of them."

<sup>18</sup> Many words shall revive, which now have fallen off; and many which are now in esteem shall fall off, if it be the will of custom, in whose power is the decision and right and standard of language." *Ars Poetica*, 70, Smart trans.

<sup>19</sup> "And the colocasia (an Egyptian bean; trans. T. F. Royds. 'odorous arum') shall spread forth, mingled with the laughing acanthus." *Eclogues* IV, 20. Whether the catachresis Dryden sees be on *ridenti*, *mista*, or *fundit*, who can say?



in his eclogue of Pollio; and in his 7th Aeneid:

*mirantur et undoe,  
Miratur nemus insuetum fulgentia longe  
Scuta virum fluvio pictasque innare carinus.*<sup>20</sup>

And Ovid once so modestly, that he asks leave to do it:

*quem, si verbo anxia detur,  
Haud metuant summi dixisse Palatia coeli.*<sup>21</sup>

calling the court of Jupiter by the name of Augustus his palace; though in another place he is more bold, where he says—*et longas visent Capitolia pompas.*<sup>21a</sup> But to do this always, and never be able to write a line without it, though it may be admired by some few pedants, will not pass upon those who know that wit is best conveyed to us in the most easy language; and is most to be admired when a great thought comes dressed in words so commonly received, that it is understood by the meanest apprehensions, as the best meat is the most easily digested: but we cannot read a verse of Cleveland's without making a face at it, as if every word were a pill to swallow: he gives us many times a hard nut to break our teeth, without a kernel for our pains. So that there is this difference betwixt his Satires and doctor Donne's; that the one gives us deep thoughts in common language, though rough cadence; the other gives us common thoughts in abstruse words: 'tis true, in some places his wit is independent of his words, as in that of the rebel Scot:

Had *Cain* been *Scot*, God would have chang'd his doom;  
Not forc'd him wander, but confin'd him home.

"*Si sic omnia dixisset!*"<sup>22</sup> This is wit in all languages: it is like Mercury, never to be lost or killed: and so that other—

For beauty, like white powder, makes no noise,  
And yet the silence hypocrite destroys.

You see the last line is highly metaphorical, but it is so soft and gentle, that it does not shock us as we read it.

"But, to return from whence I have digressed, to the consideration of the Ancients' writing, and their wit (of which by this time you will grant us in some measure to be fit judges). Though I see many excellent thoughts in Seneca, yet he of them who had a genius most proper for the stage, was Ovid; he had a way of writing so fit to stir up a pleasing admiration and

<sup>20</sup> "The woods and waters wonder at the gleam of shields, and painted ships, that stem the stream." *Aeneid* VIII, 91. Dryden trans.

<sup>21</sup> "Which, if a verbal licence may be granted, I shall not fear to call the Palatia (Caesar's place) of the sky." <sup>21a</sup> "The capitol sees long processions." *Metam.* I, pp. 175, 561.

<sup>22</sup> "If only he had spoken all things after this manner!" Juvenal, *Sat.*, 10, 123.

concernment, which are the objects of a tragedy, and to show the various movements of a soul combating betwixt two different passions, that, had he lived in our age, or in his own could have written with our advantages, no man but must have yielded to him; and therefore I am confident the *Medea* is none of his: for, though I esteem it for the gravity and sententiousness of it, which he himself concludes to be suitable to a tragedy—*Omne genus scripti gravitate tragoedia vincit*<sup>23</sup>—yet it moves not my soul enough to judge that he, who in the epic way wrote things so near the drama as the story of Myrrha, of Paunus and Biblis, and the rest, should stir up no more concernment where he most endeavoured it. The masterpiece of Seneca I hold to be that scene in the *Troades*, where Ulysses is seeking for Astyanax to kill him: there you see the tenderness of a mother so represented in Andromache, that it raises compassion to a high degree in the reader, and bears the nearest resemblance of anything in the tragedies of the ancients to the excellent scenes of passion in Shakespeare, or in Fletcher: for love-scenes, you will find few among them; their tragic poets dealt not with that soft passion, but with lust, cruelty, revenge, ambition, and those bloody actions they produced; which were more capable of raising horror than compassion in an audience: leaving love untouched, whose gentleness would have tempered them; which is the most frequent of all the passions, and which, being the private concernment of every person, is soothed by viewing its own image in a public entertainment.

"Among their comedies, we find a scene or two of tenderness, and that where you would least expect it, in Plautus; but to speak generally, their lovers say little, when they see each other, but *anima mea vita mea*; Ζωή καὶ ψυχὴ<sup>24</sup> as the women in Juvenal's time used to cry out in the fury of their kindness. Any sudden gust of passion (as an ecstasy of love in an unexpected meeting) cannot better be expressed than in a word and a sigh, breaking one another. Nature is dumb on such occasions; and to make her speak would be to represent her unlike herself. But there are a thousand other concernments of lovers, as jealousies, complaints, contrivances, and the like, where not to open their minds at large to each other, were to be wanting to their own love, and to the expectation of the audience; who watch the movements of their minds, as much as the changes of their fortunes. For the imaging of the first is properly the work of a poet; the latter he borrows from the historian."

Eugenius was proceeding in that part of his discourse, when Crites interrupted him "I see," said he, "Eugenius and I are never like to have this question decided betwixt us; for he maintains the Moderns have acquired a new perfection in writing; I can only grant they have altered the mode of it. Homer described his heroes men of great appetites, lovers of beef broiled upon the coals, and good fellows; contrary to the practice of the French

<sup>23</sup> "In gravity tragedy surpasses every genre of writing." Ovid, *Tristia* II, 381.

<sup>24</sup> "My soul, my life." (The Greek phrases, with the same meanings, are in the reverse order.)

Romances, whose heroes neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, for love. Virgil makes Aeneas a bold avower of his own virtues:

*Sum pius Aeneas, fama super aethera notus*,<sup>25</sup>

which, in the civility of our poets is the character of a fanfaron or Hector: for with us the knight takes occasion to walk out, or sleep, to avoid the vanity of telling his own story, which the trusty 'squire is ever to perform for him. So in their love-scenes, of which Eugenius spoke last, the ancients were more hearty, were more talkative: they wrote love as it was then the mode to make it; and I will grant thus much to Eugenius, that perhaps one of their poets had he lived in our age, *si foret hoc nostrum fato delapsus in aevum*<sup>26</sup> (as Horace says of Lucilius), he had altered many things; not that they were not natural before, but that he might accommodate himself to the age in which he lived. Yet in the meantime, we are not to conclude anything rashly against those great men, but preserve to them the dignity of masters, and give that honour to their memories, *quos Libitina sacravit*,<sup>27</sup> part of which we expect may be paid to us in future times."

This moderation of Crites, as it was pleasing to all the company, so it put an end to that dispute; which Eugenius, who seemed to have the better of the argument, would urge no farther: but Lisideus, after he had acknowledged himself of Eugenius his opinion concerning the Ancient, yet told him, he had forborne, till his discourse were ended, to ask him why he preferred the English plays above those of other nations? And whether we ought not to submit our stage to the exactness of our next neighbours?

"Though," said Eugenius, "I am at all times, ready to defend the honour of my country against the French and to maintain, we are as well able to vanquish them with our pens, as our ancestors have been with their swords; yet, if you please," added he, looking upon Neander, "I will commit this cause to my friend's management; his opinion of our plays is the same with mine, and besides, there is no reason, that Crites and I, who have now left the stage, should re-enter so suddenly upon it; which is against the laws of comedy."

"If the question had been stated," replied Lisideus, "who had written best, the French or English, forty years ago, I should have been of your opinion, and adjudged the honour to our own nation; but since that time" (said he, turning towards Neander), "we have been so long together bad Englishmen that we had not leisure to be good poets. Beaumont, Fletcher, and Jonson (who were only capable of bringing us to that degree of perfection which we have), were just then leaving the world; as if in an age of so much horror, wit, and those milder studies of humanity, had no farther business among us.

<sup>25</sup> "I am that dutiful Aeneas, famed above the heavens." This line is constructed from parts of two, *Aeneid* 1, 378-79.

<sup>26</sup> "If he had been dropped by the fates into this age of ours." *Sat.* I, 10, 68.

<sup>27</sup> "Which Libitina (goddess of funerals) has hallowed." Horace, *Epist.*, II, 1, 49.

But the Muses, who ever follow peace, went to plant in another country: it was then that the great Cardinal Richelieu began to take them into his protection; and that, by his encouragement, Corneille, and some other Frenchmen, reformed their theatre (which before was as much below ours, as it now surpasses it and the rest of Europe). But because Crites in his discourse for the Ancients has prevented me, by observing many rules of the stage which the Moderns have borrowed from them, I shall only, in short, demand of you, whether you are not convinced that of all nations the French have best observed them? In the Unity of Time you find them so scrupulous that it yet remains a dispute among their poets, whether the artificial day of twelve hours, more or less, be not meant by Aristotle, rather than the natural one of twenty-four; and consequently, whether all plays ought not to be reduced into that compass. This I can testify, that in all their dramas written within these last twenty years and upwards, I have not observed any that have extended the time to thirty hours: in the Unity of Place they are full as scrupulous; for many of their critics limit it to that very spot of ground where the play is supposed to begin; none of them exceed the compass of the same town or city. The Unity of Action in all plays is yet more conspicuous; for they do not burden them with under-plots, as the English do: which is the reason why many scenes of our tragi-comedians carry on a design that is nothing of kin to the main plot; and that we see two distinct webs in a play, like those in ill-wrought stuffs; and two actions, that is, two plays, carried on together, to the confounding of the audience; who, before they are warm in their concernments for one part, are diverted to another; and by that means espouse the interest of neither. From hence likewise it arises that the one half of our actors are not known to the other. They keep their distances, as if they were Montagues and Capulets, and seldom begin an acquaintance till the last scene of the fifth act, when they are all to meet upon the stage. There is no theatre in the world that has anything so absurd as the English tragi-comedy; 'tis a drama of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so; here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, and a third of honour and a duel: thus, in two hours and a half, we run through all the fits of Bedlam. The French affords you as much variety on the same day, but they do it not so unseasonably, or *mal à propos*, as we: our poets present you the play and the farce together; and our stages still retain somewhat of the original civility of the Red Bull:

*Atque ursum et pugiles media inter carmina poscunt.*<sup>28</sup>

The end of tragedies or serious plays, says Aristotle, is to beget admiration, compassion, or concernment; but are not mirth and compassion things incompatible? And is it not of the body of it. Would you not think that physician mad, who, having prescribed a purge, should immediately order you to take restraints?

<sup>28</sup> . . . *media inter carmina poscunt Aut ursum aut pugiles*: "In the middle of plays call for a bear or boxers." Horace, *Epist.*, II, 1, 185.

"But to leave our plays, and return to theirs. I have noted one great advantage they have had in the plotting of their tragedies; that is, they are always grounded upon some known history: according to that of Horace, *Ex noto fictum carmen sequar*;<sup>29</sup> and in that they have so imitated the Ancients that they have surpassed them. For the Ancients, as was observed before, took for the foundation of their plays some poetical fiction, such as under that consideration could move but little concernment in the audience, because they already knew the event of it. But the French goes farther:

*Atque ita mentitur, sic veris falsa remiscet  
Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet unum.*<sup>30</sup>

He so interweaves truth with probable fiction that he puts a pleasing fallacy upon us; mends the intrigues of fate, and dispenses with the severity of history, to reward that virtue which has been rendered to us there unfortunate. Sometimes the story has left the success so doubtful that the writer is free, by the privilege of a poet, to take that which of two or more relations will best suit with his design as for example, in the death of Cyrus, whom Justin and some others report to have perished in the Scythian war, but Xenophon affirms to have died in his bed of extreme old age. Nay more, when the event is past dispute, even then we are willing to be deceived, and the poet, if he contrives it with appearance of truth, has all the audience of his party, at least during the time his play is acting, so naturally we are kind to virtue, when our own interest is not in question, that we take it up as the general concernment of mankind. On the other side, if you consider the historical plays of Shakespeare, they are rather so many chronicles of kings, or the business many times of thirty or forty years, cramped into a representation of two hours and a half, which is not to imitate or paint nature, but rather to draw her in miniature, to take her in little; to look upon her through the wrong end of a perspective, and receive her images not only much less, but infinitely more imperfect than the life: this, instead of making a play delightful, renders it ridiculous.

*Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.*<sup>31</sup>

For the spirit of man cannot be satisfied but with truth, or at least verisimilitude; and a poem is to contain, if not τὰ ξύμμετρα, yet ξυμμοισιν ὁμοια<sup>32</sup> as one of the Greek poets has expressed it.

<sup>29</sup> "I should construct a poem founded on a well known story." Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 240.

<sup>30</sup> "And he so lies, so mixes the false with the true, that the middle part is not discernible from the first, or the last part from the middle." *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>31</sup> "Whatever you thus show me, I hold incredible and odious." Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 188.

<sup>32</sup> "True things" (Hesiod, *Theogonia*, 27); [yet] "things like the truth" (Homer, *Od.*, xix, 203).

"Another thing in which the French differ from us and from the Spaniards, is that they do not embarrass, or cumber themselves with too much plot; they only represent so much of a story as will constitute one whole and great action sufficient for a play; we, who undertake more, do but multiply adventures which, not being produced from one another, as effects from causes, but rarely following, constitute many actions in the drama, and consequently make it many plays.

"But by pursuing closely one argument, which is not cloyed with many turns, the French have gained more liberty for verse, in which they write; they have leisure to dwell on a subject which deserves it; and to represent the passions (which we have acknowledged to be the poet's work), without being hurried from one thing to another, as we are in the plays of Calderon, which we have seen lately upon our theatres under the name of Spanish plots. I have taken notice but of one tragedy of ours whose plot has that uniformity and unity of design in it, which I have commended in the French; and that is *Rollo*, or rather, under the name of Rollo, the story of Bassianus and Geta in Herodian; there indeed the plot is neither large nor intricate, but just enough to fill the minds of the audience, not to cloy them. Besides, you see it founded upon the truth of history—only the time of the action is not reduceable to the strictness of the rules; and you see in some places a little farce mingled, which is below the dignity of the other parts, and in this all our poets are extremely peccant; even Ben Jonson himself, in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, has given us this oleo of a play, this unnatural mixture of comedy and tragedy; which to me sounds just as ridiculously as the history of David with the merry humours of Goliath. In *Sejanus* you may take notice of the scene betwixt Livia and the physician which is a pleasant satire upon the artificial helps of beauty: in *Catiline* you may see the parliament of women; the little envies of them to one another; and all that passes betwixt Curio and Fulvia: scenes admirable in their kind, but of an ill mingle with the rest.

"But I return again to the French writers, who, as I have said, do not burden themselves too much with plot, which has been reproached to them by an *ingenious person* of our nation as a fault; for, he says, they commonly make but one person considerable in a play; they dwell on him, and his concernments, while the rest of the persons are only subservient to set him off. If he intends this by it—that there is one person in the play who is of greater dignity than the rest, he must tax, not only theirs, but those of the Ancients, and which he would be loth to do, the best of ours; for it is impossible but that one person must be more conspicuous in it than any other, and consequently the greatest share in the action must devolve on him. We see it so in the management of all affairs; even in the most equal aristocracy, the balance cannot be so justly poised but some one will be superior to the rest, either in parts, fortune, interest, or the consideration of some glorious exploit; which will reduce the greatest part of business into his hands.

"But, if he would have us to imagine, that in exalting one character the rest of them are neglected, and that all of them have not some share or other

in the action of the play, I desire him to produce any of Corneille's tragedies, wherein every person, like so many servants in a well-governed family, has not some employment, and who is not necessary to the carrying on of the plot, or at least to your understanding it.

"There are indeed some protatic persons in the Ancients, whom they make use of in their plays, either to hear or give the relation: but the French avoid this with great address, making their narrations only to, or by such, who are some way interested in the main design. And now I am speaking of relations, I cannot take a fitter opportunity to add this in favour of the French, that they often use them with better judgement and more *à propos* than the English do. Not that I commend narrations in general—but there are two sorts of them. One, of those things which are antecedent to the play, and are related to make the conduct of it more clear to us. But 'tis a fault to choose such subjects for the stage as will force us on that rock because we see they are seldom listened to by the audience and that is many times the ruin of the play; for, being once let pass without attention, the audience can never recover themselves to understand the plot: and indeed it is somewhat unreasonable, that they should be put to so much trouble, as that, to comprehend what passes in their sight, they must have recourse to what was done, perhaps, ten or twenty years ago.

"But there is another sort of relations, that is, of things happening in the action of the play, and supposed to be done behind the scenes; and this is many times both convenient and beautiful; for by it the French avoid the tumult to which we are subject in England, by representing duels, battles, and the like; which renders our stage too like the theatres where they fight prizes. For what is more ridiculous than to represent an army with a drum and five men behind it; all which the hero of the other side is to drive in before him; or to see a duel fought, and one slain with two or three thrusts of the foils, which we know are so blunted that we might give a man an hour to kill another in good earnest with them.

"I have observed that in all our tragedies, the audience cannot forbear laughing when the actors are to die; it is the most comic part of the whole play. All *passions* may be lively represented on the stage, if to the well-writing of them the actor supplies a good commanded voice, and limbs that move easily, and without stiffness; but there are many *actions* which can never be imitated to a just height: dying especially is a thing which none but a Roman gladiator could naturally perform on the stage, when he did not imitate or represent, but do it; and therefore it is better to omit the representation of it.

"The words of a good writer, which describe it lively, will make a deeper impression of belief in us than all the actor can insinuate into us, when he seems to fall dead before us; as a poet in the description of a beautiful garden, or a meadow, will please our imagination more than the place itself can please our sight. When we see death represented, we are convinced it is but fiction; but when we hear it related, our eyes, the strongest witnesses,

are wanting, which might have undeceived us; and we are all willing to favour the sleight, when the poet does not too grossly impose on us. They therefore who imagine these relations would make no concernment in the audience, are deceived, by confounding them with the other, which are of things antecedent to the play: those are made often in blood, as I may say, to the audience; but these are warmed with our concernments, which were before awakened in the play. What the philosophers say of motion, that, when it is once begun, it continues of itself, and will do so to eternity, without some stop put to it, is clearly true on this occasion: the soul being already moved with the characters and fortunes of those imaginary persons, continues going of its own accord; and we are no more weary to hear what becomes of them when they are not on the stage, than we are to listen to the news of an absent mistress. But it is objected, that if one part of the play may be related, then why not all? I answer, some parts of the action are more fit to be represented, some to be related. Corneille says judiciously that the poet is not obliged to expose to view all particular actions which conduce to the principal: he ought to select such of them to be seen, which will appear with the greatest beauty, either by the magnificence of the show, or the vehemence of passions which they produce, or some other charm which they have in them; and let the rest arrive to the audience by narration. 'Tis a great mistake in us to believe the French present no part of the action on the stage; every alteration or crossing of a design, every new-sprung passion, and turn of it, is a part of the action, and much the noblest, except we conceive nothing to be action till the players come to blows; as if the painting of the hero's mind were not more properly the poet's work than the strength of his body. Nor does this anything contradict the opinion of Horace, where he tells us:

*Segetius irritant animos demissa per aurem,  
Quam quoe sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*<sup>33</sup>

For he says immediately after:

*Non tamen intus  
Digna geri promes in scenam; multaq; tolles  
Ex oculis, quoe mox narret facundia proesens.*

Among which many he recounts some:

*Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,  
Aut in avem Progne mutetur, Cadmus in anguem, etc.*

<sup>33</sup> "What things are given through the ears stir the mind less forcibly than what are put before the faithful eyes." Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 180-81. He continues with the lines which Dryden next quotes: "Things worthy to be done off stage should not be brought to pass upon it; you must keep many events from sight and presently contrive to narrate them."

"Medea should not carve up the children in front of the audience; nor should Progne be changed into a bird there, nor Cadmus into a snake."



That is, those actions which by reason of their cruelty, will cause aversion in us, or by reason of their impossibility, unbelief, ought either wholly to be avoided by a poet, or only delivered by narration. To which we may have leave to add, such as, to avoid tumult (as was before hinted), or to reduce the plot into a more reasonable compass of time, or for defect of beauty in them, are rather to be related than presented to the eye. Examples of all these kinds are frequent, not only among all the Ancients, but in the best received of our English poets. We find Ben Jonson using them in his *Magnetic Lady*, where one comes out from dinner, and relates the quarrels and disorders of it, to save the undecent appearance of them on the stage, and to abbreviate the story; and this in express imitation of Terence, who had done the same before him in his *Eunuch*, where Pythias makes the like relation of what had happened within at the Soldier's entertainment. The relations likewise of Sejanus's death, and the prodigies before it, are remarkable; the one of which was hid from sight, to avoid the horror and tumult of the representation, the other, to shun the introducing of things impossible to be believed. In that excellent play, *The King and no King*, Fletcher goes yet farther; for the whole unravelling of the plot is done by narration in the fifth act, after the manner of the Ancients; and it moves great concernment in the audience, though it be only a relation of what was done many years before the play. I could multiply other instances, but these are sufficient to prove that there is no error in choosing a subject which requires this sort of narrations; in the ill management of them, there may.

"But I find I have been too long in this discourse, since the French have many other excellencies not common to us; as that you never see any of their plays end with a conversion, or simple change of will, which is the ordinary way which our poets use to end theirs. It shows little art in the conclusion of a dramatic poem, when they who have hindered the felicity during the four acts, desist from it in the fifth, without some powerful cause to take them off their design; and though I deny not but such reasons may be found, yet it is a path that is cautiously to be trod, and the poet is to be sure he convinces the audience that the motive is strong enough. As for example, the conversion of the Usurer in *The Scornful Lady* seems to me a little forced; for, being an Usurer, which implies a lover of money to the highest degree of covetousness—and such the poet has represented him—the account he gives for the sudden change is, that he has been duped by the wild young fellow; which in reason might render him more wary another time, and make him punish himself with harder far and coarser clothes, to get up again what he had lost: but that he should look on it as a judgement, and so repent, we may expect to hear in a sermon, but I should never endure it in a play.

"I pass by this; neither will I insist on the care they take that no person after his first entrance shall ever appear, but the business which brings him upon the stage shall be evident; which rule, if observed, must needs render all the events in the play more natural; for there you see the probability of every accident, in the cause that produced it; and that which appears chance

in the play, will seem so reasonable to you, that you will there find it almost necessary: so that in the exit of the actor you have a clear account of his purpose and design in the next entrance (though, if the scene be well wrought, the event will commonly deceive you); for there is nothing so absurd, says Corneille, as for an actor to leave the stage only because he has no more to say.

"I should now speak of the beauty of their rhyme, and the just reason I have to prefer that way of writing in tragedies before ours in blank verse; but because it is partly received by us, and therefore not altogether peculiar to them, I will say no more of it in relation to their plays. For our own, I doubt not but it will exceedingly beautify them; and I can see but one reason why it should not generally obtain, that is, because our poets write so ill in it. This indeed may prove a more prevailing argument than all others which are used to destroy it, and therefore I am only troubled when great and judicious poets, and those who are acknowledged such, have written or spoke against it: as for others, they are to be answered by that one sentence of an ancient author: *Sed ut primo ad consequendos eos quos priores ducimus, accendimur, ita ubi aut proeteriri, aut aequari eos posse desperavimus, studium cum spe senescit: quod, scilicet, assequi non potest, sequi desinit; . . . præteritoque eo in quo eminere non possumus, aliquid in quo nitamur conquirimus.*"<sup>34</sup>

Lisideius concluded in this manner; and Neander, after a little pause, thus answered him:

"I shall grant Lisideius, without much dispute, a great part of what he has urged against us; for I acknowledge that the French contrive their plots more regularly, and observe the laws of comedy, and decorum of the stage (to speak generally), with more exactness than the English. Farther, I deny not but he has taxed us justly in some irregularities of ours, which he has mentioned; yet, after all, I am of opinion that neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us.

"For the lively imitation of nature being in the definition of a play, those which best fulfil that law ought to be esteemed superior to the others. 'Tis true, those beauties of the French poesy are such as will raise perfection higher where it is, but are not sufficient to give it where it is not: they are indeed the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of poesy, which is imitation of humour and passions: and this Lisideius himself, or any other, however biassed to their party, cannot but acknowledge, if he will either compare the humours of our comedies, or the characters of our serious plays, with theirs. He who will look upon theirs which have been written till these last ten years, or thereabouts, will find it a hard matter to pick out two or three passable humours amongst them. Corneille himself, their arch-poet, what has he produced except *The Liar*, and

<sup>34</sup> "But as we are fired to the following of those whom we consider foremost, so when we despair either of surpassing or equalling them, our zeal wanes with our hope; indeed, because it cannot excel, it ceases to follow. That being past in which we cannot be foremost, we seek for something on which to strive." Velleius I, p. 17.

you know how it has cried up in France; but when it came upon the English stage, though well translated, and that part of Dorant acted to so much advantage as I am confident it never received in its own country, the most favourable to it would not put it in competition with many of Fletcher's or Ben Jonson's. In the rest of Corneille's comedies you have little humour; he tells you himself, his way is, first to show two lovers in good intelligence with each other; in the working up of the play embroil them by some mistake, and in the latter end to clear it, and reconcile them.

"But of late years Moliere, the younger Corneille, Quinault, and some others, have been imitating afar off the quick turns and graces of the English stage. They have mixed their serious plays with mirth, like our tragi-comedies, since the death of Cardinal Richelieu, which Lisideius and many others not observing, have commended that in them for a virtue which they themselves no longer practise. Most of their new plays are, like some of ours, derived from the Spanish novels. There is scarce one of them without a veil, and a trusty Diego, who drolls much after the rate of *The Adventures*. But their humours, if I may grace them with that name, are so thin-sown, that never above one of them comes up in any play. I dare take upon me to find more variety of them in some one play of Ben Jonson's than in all theirs together; as he who has seen *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman*, or *Bartholomew-Fair*, cannot but acknowledge with me.

"I grant the French have performed what was possible on the groundwork of the Spanish plays: what was pleasant before, they have made regular: but there is not above one good play to be written on all those plots, they are too much alike to please often: which we need not the experience of our own stage to justify. As for their new way of mingling mirth with serious plot, I do not, with Lisideius, condemn the thing, though I cannot approve their manner of doing it. He tells us, we cannot so speedily recollect ourselves after a scene of great passion and concernment, as to pass to another of mirth and humour, and to enjoy it with any relish: but why should he imagine the soul of man more heavy than his senses? Does not the eye pass from an unpleasant object to a pleasant in a much shorter time than is required to this? And does not the unpleasantness of the first commend the beauty of the latter? The old rule of logic might have convinced him, that contraries, when placed near, set off each other. A continued gravity keeps the spirit too much bent; we must refresh it sometimes, as we bait in a journey that we may go on with greater ease. A scene of mirth, mixed with tragedy, has the same effect upon us which our music has betwixt the acts; which we find a relief to us from the best plots and language of the stage, if the discourses have been long. I must therefore have stronger arguments, ere I am convinced that compassion and mirth in the same subject destroy each other; and in the meantime cannot but conclude, to the honour of our nation, that we have invented, increased, and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage, than was ever known to the ancients or moderns of any nation, which is tragi-comedy.

"And this leads me to wonder why Lisideus and many others should cry up the barrenness of the French plots above the variety and copiousness of the English. Their plots are single; they carry on one design, which pushed forward by all the actors, every scene in the play contributing and moving towards it. Our plays, besides the main design, have under-plots or by-concernments, of less considerable persons and intrigues, which are carried on with the motion of the main plot: as they say the orb of the fixed stars, and those of the planets, though they have motions of their own, are whirled about by the motion of the *primum mobile*, in which they are contained. That similitude expresses much of the English stage; for if contrary motions may be found in nature to agree; if a planet can go east and west at the same time—one way by virtue of his own motion, the other by the force of the First Mover—it will not be difficult to imagine how the under-plot, which is only different, not contrary to the great design, may naturally be conducted along with it.

"Eugenius has already shown us, from the confession of the French poets, that the Unity of Action is sufficiently preserved, if all the imperfect actions of the play are conducing to the main design; but when those petty intrigues of a play are so ill ordered, that they have no coherence with the other, I must grant that Lisideus has reason to tax that want of due connection; for co-ordination in a play is as dangerous and unnatural as in a state. In the meantime he must acknowledge, our variety, if well ordered, will afford a greater pleasure to the audience

"As for his other argument, that by pursuing one single theme they gain an advantage to express and work up the passions, I wish any example he could bring from them would make it good; for I confess their verses are to me the coldest I have ever read. Neither, indeed, is it possible for them, in the way they take, so to express passion, as that the effects of it should appear in the concernment of an audience, their speeches being so many declamations, which tire us with the length; so that instead of persuading us to grieve for their imaginary heroes, we are concerned for our own trouble, as we are in tedious visits of bad company; we are in pain till they are gone. When the French stage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richelieu, those long harangues were introduced to comply with the gravity of a churchman. Look upon the *Cinna* and the *Pompey*; they are not so properly to be called plays, as long discourses of reason of state; and *Polieucte* in matters of religion is as solemn as the long stops upon our organs. Since that time it is grown into a custom, and their actors speak by the hour-glass, like our parsons; nay, they account it the grace of their parts, and think themselves disparaged by the poet, if they may not twice or thrice in a play entertain the audience with a speech of an hundred lines. I deny not but this may suit well enough with the French; for as we, who are a more sullen people, come to be diverted at our plays, so they, who are of an airy and gay temper, come thither to make themselves more serious: and this I conceive to be one reason why comedies are more pleasing to us, and tragedies to them. But to speak generally: it cannot be

denied that short speeches and replies are more apt to move the passions and beget concernment in us, than the other; for it is unnatural for any one in a gust of passion to speak long together, or for another in the same condition to suffer him, without interruption. Grief and passion are like floods raised in little brooks by a sudden rain; they are quickly up; and if the concernment be poured unexpectedly in upon us, it overflows us: but a long sober shower gives them leisure to run out as they came in, without troubling the ordinary current. As for Comedy, repartee is one of its chiefest graces; the greatest pleasure of the audience is a chase of wit, kept up on both sides, and swiftly managed. And this our forefathers, if not we, have had in Fletcher's plays, to a much higher degree of perfection than the French poets can reasonably hope to reach

"There is another part of Lisideus his discourse, in which he rather excused our neighbours than commended them; that is for aiming only to make one person considerable in their plays. 'Tis very true what he has urged, that one character in all plays, even without the poet's care, will have advantage of all the others; and that the design of the whole drama will chiefly depend on it. But this hinders not that there may be more shining characters in the play: many persons of a second magnitude, nay, some so very near, so almost equal to the first, that greatness may be opposed to greatness, and all the persons be made considerable, not only by their quality, but their action. 'Tis evident that the more the persons are, the greater will be the variety of the plot. If then the parts are managed so regularly, that the beauty of the whole be kept entire, and that the variety become not a perplexed and confused mass of accidents, you will find it infinitely pleasing to be led in a labyrinth of design, where you see some of your way before you, yet discern not the end till you arrive at it. And that all this is practicable, I can produce for examples many of our English plays. as *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman*. I was going to have named *The Fox*, but that the unity of design seems not exactly observed in it, for there appear two actions in the play; the first naturally ending with the fourth act; the second forced from it in the fifth; which yet is the less to be condemned in him, because the disguise of Volpone, though it suited not with his character as a crafty or covetous person, agreed well enough with that of a voluptuary; and by it the poet gained the end at which he aimed, the punishment of vice, and the reward of virtue, both which that disguise produced. So that to judge equally of it, it was an excellent fifth act, but not so naturally proceeding from the former.

"But to leave this, and pass to the latter part of Lisideus his discourse, which concerns relations: I must acknowledge with him, that the French have reason to hide that part of the action which would occasion too much tumult on the stage, and to choose rather to have it made known by narration to the audience. Farther, I think it very convenient, for the reasons he has given, that all incredible actions were removed; but whether custom has so insinuated itself into our countrymen, or nature has so formed them to fierceness, I know not; but they will scarcely suffer combats and other objects of

horror to be taken from them. And indeed, the indecency of tumults is all which can be objected against fighting: for why may not our imagination as well suffer itself to be deluded with the probability of it, as with any other thing in the play? For my part, I can with as great ease persuade myself that the blows are given in good earnest, as I can that they who strike them are kings or princes, or those persons which they represent. For objects of incredibility—I would be satisfied from Lisideus, whether we have any so removed from all appearance of truth, as are those of Corneille's *Andromede*; a play which has been frequented the most of any he has written. If the Perseus, or the son of a heathen god, the Pegasus, and the Monster, were not capable to choke a strong belief, let him blame any representation of ours hereafter. Those indeed were objects of delight; yet the reason is the same as to the probability: for he makes it not a Ballette or masque, but a play, which is to resemble truth. But for death, that it ought not to be represented, I have, besides the arguments alleged by Lisideus, the authority of Ben Jonson, who has forborne it in his tragedies; for both the death of Sejanus and Catiline are related: though in the latter I cannot but observe one irregularity of that great poet; he has removed the scene in the same act from Rome to Catiline's army, and from thence again to Rome; and besides, has allowed a very inconsiderable time, after Catiline's speech, for the striking of the battle, and the return of Petreius, who is to relate the event of it to the senate: which I should not animadvert on him, who was otherwise a painful observer of τὸ πρεπον or the *decorum* of the stage, if he had not used extreme severity in his judgement on the incomparable Shakespeare for the same fault—to conclude on this subject of relations, if we are to be blamed for showing too much of the action, the French are as faulty for discovering too little of it: a mean betwixt both should be observed by every judicious writer, so as the audience may neither be left unsatisfied by not seeing what is beautiful, or shocked by beholding what is either incredible or indecent.

"I hope I have already proved in this discourse, that though we are not altogether so punctual as the French in observing the laws of comedy, yet our errors are so few, and little, and those things wherein we excel them so considerable, that we ought of right to be preferred before them. But what will Lisideus say, if they themselves acknowledge they are too strictly bounded by those laws, for breaking which he has blamed the English? I will allege Corneille's words, as I find them in the end of his Discourse of the Three Unities: *Il est facile aux spéculatifs d'estre sévères, etc.* 'Tis easy for speculative persons to judge severely; but if they would produce to public view ten or twelve pieces of this nature, they would perhaps give more latitude to the rules than I have done, when by experience they had known how much we are limited and constrained by them, and how many beauties of the stage they banished from it.' To illustrate a little what he has said: by their servile observations of the Unities of Time and Place, and integrity of scenes, they have brought on themselves that dearth of plot, and narrowness of imagination, which may be observed in all their plays. How many beautiful

accidents might naturally happen in two or three days, which cannot arrive with any probability in the compass of twenty-four hours? There is time to be allowed also for maturity of design, which, amongst great and prudent persons, such as are often represented in tragedy, cannot, with any likelihood of truth, be brought to pass at so short a warning. Farther, by tying themselves strictly to the Unity of Place, and unbroken scenes, they are forced many times to omit some beauties which cannot be shown where the act began; but might, if the scene were interrupted, and the stage cleared for the persons to enter in another place; and therefore the French poets are often forced upon absurdities; for if the act begins in a chamber, all the persons in the play must have some business or other to come thither, or else they are not to be shown that act; and sometimes their characters are very unfitting to appear there: as, suppose it were the king's bed-chamber; yet the meanest man in the tragedy must come and dispatch his business there, rather than in the lobby or courtyard (which is fitter for him), for fear the stage should be cleared, and the scenes broken. Many times they fall by it in a greater inconvenience, for they keep their scenes unbroken, and yet change the place; as in one of their newest plays, where the act begins in the street. There a gentleman is to meet his friend; he sees him with his man, coming out from his father's house; they talk together, and the first goes out: the second, who is a lover, has made an appointment with his mistress; she appears at the window, and then we are to imagine the scene lies under it. This gentleman is called away, and leaves his servant with his mistress; presently her father is heard from within; the young lady is afraid the serving-man should be discovered, and thrusts him into a place of safety, which is supposed to be her closet. After this, the father enters to the daughter, and now the scene is in a house: for he is seeking from one room to another for his poor Philipin, or French Diego, who is heard from within, drolling and breaking many a miserable conceit on the subject of his sad condition. In this ridiculous manner the play goes forward, the stage being never empty all the while: so that the street, the window, the houses, and the closet, are made to walk about, and the persons to stand still. Now what, I beseech you, is more easy than to write a regular French play, or more difficult than to write an irregular English one, like those of Fletcher, or of Shakespeare?

"If they content themselves, as Corneille did, with some flat design, which, like an ill riddle, is found out ere it be half proposed, such plots we can make every way regular, as easily as they, but whenever they endeavour to rise to any quick turns and counterturns of plot, as some of them have attempted, since Corneille's plays have been less in vogue, you see they write as irregularly as we, though they cover it more spaciouly. Hence the reason is perspicuous why no French plays, when translated, have, or ever can succeed on the English stage. For, if you consider the plots, our own are fuller of variety; if the writing, ours are more quick and fuller of spirit; and therefore 'tis a strange mistake in those who decry the way of writing plays in verse, as if the English therein imitated the French. We have borrowed nothing from

them; our plots are weaved in English looms: we endeavour therein to follow the variety and greatness of characters which are derived to us from Shakespeare and Fletcher; the copiousness and well-knitting of the intrigues we have from Jonson; and for the verse itself we have English precedents of elder date than any of Corneille's plays. Not to name our old comedies before Shakespeare, which were all written in verse of six feet, or Alexandrines, such as the French now use—I can show in Shakespeare many scenes of rhyme together, and the like in Ben Jonson's tragedies: in *Catiline* and *Sejanus* sometimes thirty or forty lines—I mean besides the chorus, or the monologues; which, by the way, showed Ben no enemy to this way of writing, especially if you read his *Sail Shepherd*, which goes sometimes on rhyme, sometimes on blank verse, like a horse who eases himself on trot and amble. You find him likewise commending Fletcher's pastoral of *The Faithful Shepherdess*, which is for the most part rhyme, though not refined to that purity to which it has since been brought. And these examples are enough to clear us from a servile imitation of the French.

"But to return whence I have digressed: I dare boldly affirm these two things of the English drama—first, that we have many plays of ours as regular as any of theirs. and which, besides, have more variety of plot and characters; and secondly, that in most of the irregular plays of Shakespeare or Fletcher (for Ben Jonson's are for the most part regular) there is a more masculine fancy and greater spirit in the writing than there is in any of the French. I could produce, even in Shakespeare's and Fletcher's works, some plays which are almost exactly formed; as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Scornful Lady*: but because (generally speaking) Shakespeare, who wrote first, did not perfectly observe the laws of comedy, and Fletcher, who came nearer to perfection, yet through carelessness made many faults; I will take the pattern of a perfect play from Ben Jonson, who was a careful and learned observer of the dramatic laws. and from all his comedies I shall select *The Silent Woman*; of which I will make a short examination, according to those rules which the French observe."

As Neander was beginning to examine *The Silent Woman*, Eugenius, earnestly regarding him; "I beseech you, Neander," said he, "gratify the company, and me in particular, so far, as before you speak of the play, to give us a character of the author; and tell us frankly your opinion, whether you do not think all writers, both French and English, ought to give place to him."

"I fear," replied Neander, "that in obeying your commands I shall draw some envy on myself. Besides, in performing them, it will be first necessary to speak somewhat of Shakespeare and Fletcher, his rivals in poesy; and one of them, in my opinion, at least his equal, perhaps his superior."

"To begin, then, with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too.



Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; where he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets,

*Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.*<sup>35</sup>

The consideration of this made Mr Hales of Eaton say, that there was no subject of which any poet ever wrote, but he would produce it much better done in Shakespeare; and however others are now generally preferred before him, yet the age wherein he lived, which had contemporaries with him Fletcher and Jonson, never equalled them to him in their esteem. and in the last King's court, when Ben's reputation was at highest. Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the courtiers, set our Shakespeare far above him

"Beaumont and Fletcher, of whom I am next to speak, had, with the advantage of Shakespeare's wit, which was their precedent, great natural gifts, improved by study. Beaumont especially being so accurate a judge of plays, that Ben Jonson, while he lived, submitted all his writings to his censure, and 'tis thought, used his judgement in correcting if not contriving, all his plots. What value he had for him, appears by the verses he wrote to him, and therefore I need speak no farther of it. The first play that brought Fletcher and him in esteem was their *Philostratus* for before that, they had written two or three very unsuccessfully, as the like is reported of Ben Jonson, before he wrote *Every Man in his Humour*. Their plots were generally more regular than Shakespeare's especially those which were made before Beaumont's death; and they understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better; whose wild debaucheries, and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet before them could paint as they have done. Humour, which Ben Jonson derived from particular persons, they made it not their business to describe: they represented all the passions very lively, but above all, love. I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to its highest perfection: what words have since been taken in, are rather superfluous than ornamental. Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Jonson's: the reason is, because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suit generally with all men's humours. Shakespeare's language is likewise a little obsolete, and Ben Jonson's wit comes short of theirs

<sup>35</sup> "As cypresses usually do among bending shrubs." Virgil, *Eclogues* I, 26.

"As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit, and language, and humour also in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people. He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them: there is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times whom he has not translated in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be theft in other poets is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, 'twas that he weaved it too closely and laboriously, in his comedies especially; perhaps, too, he did a little too much Romanize our tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them: wherein, though he learnedly followed their language, he did not enough comply with the idiom of ours. If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare. To conclude of him; as he has given us the most correct plays, so in the precepts which he has laid down in his *Discoveries*, we have as many and profitable rules for perfecting the stage, as any wherewith the French can furnish us.

"Having thus spoken of the author, I proceed to the examination of his comedy, *The Silent Woman*.

#### EXAMINATION OF *The Silent Woman*

"To begin first with the length of the action; it is so far from exceeding the compass of a natural day, that it takes not up an artificial one. 'Tis all included in the limits of three hours and a half, which is no more than is required for the presentment on the stage: a beauty perhaps not much observed; if it had, we should not have looked on the Spanish translation of *Five Hours* with so much wonder. The scene of it is laid in London; the latitude of place is almost as little as you can imagine; for it lies all within the compass of two houses, and after the first act, in one. The continuity of

scenes is observed more than in any of our plays, except his own *Fox* and *Alchemist*. They are not broken above twice or thrice at most in the whole comedy; and in the two best of Corneille's plays, the *Cid* and *Cinna*, they are interrupted once. The action of the play is entirely one; the end or aim of which is the settling Morose's estate on Dauphine. The intrigue of it is the greatest and most noble of any pure unmixed comedy in any language; you see in it many persons of various characters and humours, and all delightful. As first, Morose, or an old man, to whom all noise but his own talking is offensive. Some who would be thought critics, say his humour of his is forced; but to remove that objection, we may consider him first to be naturally of a delicate hearing, as many are, to whom all sharp sounds are unpleasant; and secondly, we may attribute much of it to the peevishness of his age, or the wayward authority of an old man in his own house, where he may make himself obeyed; and to this the poet seems to allude in his name Morose. Besides this, I am assured from diverse persons, that Ben Jonson was actually acquainted with such a man, one altogether as ridiculous as he is here represented. Others say, it is not enough to find one man of such a humour; it must be common to more, and the more common the more natural. To prove this, they instance in the best of comical characters, Falstaff. There are many men resembling him; old, fat, merry, cowardly, drunken, amorous, vain, and lying. But to convince these people, I need but tell them that humour is the ridiculous extravagance of conversation, wherein one man differs from all others. If then it be common, or communicated to many, how differs it from other men's? Or what indeed causes it to be ridiculous so much as the singularity of it? As for Falstaff, he is not properly one humour, but a miscellany of humours or images, drawn from so many several men: that wherein he is singular is his wit, or those things he says *propter expectatum*, unexpected by the audience; his quick evasions, when you imagine him surprised, which, as they are extremely diverting of themselves, so receive a great addition from his person; for the very sight of such an unwieldy old debauched fellow is a comedy alone. And here, having a place so proper for it, I cannot enlarge somewhat upon this subject of humour into which I am fallen. The ancients had little of it in their comedies; for the τὸ γελοῖον<sup>36</sup> of the old comedy, of which Aristophanes was chief, was not so much to imitate a man, as to make the people laugh at some odd conceit, which had commonly somewhat of unnatural or obscene in it. Thus, when you see Socrates brought upon the stage, you are not to imagine him made ridiculous by the imitation of his actions, but rather by making him perform something very unlike himself; something so childish and absurd, as by comparing it with the gravity of the true Socrates, makes a ridiculous object for the spectators. In their new comedy which succeeded, the poets sought indeed to express the ἥθος as in their tragedies the πάθος<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> "The laughable"

<sup>37</sup> ἥθος, "character"; πάθος "emotion."

of mankind But this ἦθος contained only the general characters of men and manners; as old men, lovers, serving-men, courtézans, parasites, and such other persons as we see in their comedies; all which they made alike: that is, one old man or father, one lover, one courtezán, so like another, as if the first of them had begot the rest of every sort: *Ex homine hunc natum dicas*.<sup>38</sup> The same custom they observed likewise in their tragedies. As for the French, though they have the word *humeur* among them, yet they have small use of it in their comedies or farces; they being but ill imitations of the *ridiculum*, or that which stirred up laughter in the old comedy. But among the English 'tis otherwise: where by humour is meant some extravagant habit, passion, or affection, particular (as I said before) to some one person, by the oddness of which, he is immediately distinguished from the rest of men; which being lively and naturally represented, most frequently begets that malicious pleasure in the audience which is testified by laughter; as all things which are deviations from customs are ever the aptest to produce it: though by the way this laughter is only accidental, as the person represented is fantastic or bizarre; but pleasure is essential to it, as the imitation of what is natural. The description of these humours, drawn from the knowledge and observation of particular persons, was the peculiar genius and talent of Ben Jonson; to whose play I now return.

"Besides Morose, there are at least nine or ten different characters and humours in *The Silent Woman*; all which persons have several concernments of their own, yet are all used by the poet to the conducting of the main design to perfection I shall not waste time in commending the writing of this play; but I will give you my opinion, that there is more wit and acuteness of fancy in it than in any of Ben Jonson's Besides that he has here described the conversation of gentlemen in the persons of True-wit, and his friends, with more gaiety, air, and freedom, than in the rest of his comedies. For the contrivance of the plot, 'tis extreme, elaborate, and yet withal easy; for the λυσις or untying of it, 'tis so admirable, that when it is done, no one of the audience would think the poet could have missed it; and yet it was concealed so much before the last scene, that any other way would sooner have entered into your thoughts. But I dare not take upon me to commend the fabric of it, because it is altogether so full of art, that I must unravel every scene in it to commend it as I ought. And this excellent contrivance is still the more to be admired, because 'tis comedy, where the persons are only of common rank, and their business private, not elevated by passions or high concernments, as in serious plays. Here every one is a proper judge of all he sees, nothing is represented but that with which he daily converses: so that by consequence all faults lie open to discovery, and few are pardonable. 'Tis this which Horace has judiciously observed:

<sup>38</sup> "You would say that this fellow was born from that man." Terence, *Eunuchus* III, 2, 7. Mr. Ker translates more freely, "The one is the born image of the other."

*Creditur, ex medio quia res arcessit, habere  
Sudoris minimum; sed habet Comedia tanto  
Plus oneris, quanto venioe minus.*<sup>39</sup>

But our poet who was not ignorant of these difficulties had made use of all advantages; as he who designs a large leap takes his rise from the highest ground. One of these advantages is that which Corneille has laid down as the greatest which can arrive to any poem, and which he himself could never compass above thrice in all his plays; viz., the making choice of some signal and long-expected day, whereon the action of the play is to depend. This day was that designed by Dauphine for the settling of his uncle's estate upon him; which to compass, he contrives to marry him. That the marriage had been plotted by him long beforehand, is made evident by what he tells True-wit in the second act, that in one moment he had destroyed what he had been raising many months.

"There is another artifice of the poet, which I cannot here omit, because by the frequent practice of it in his comedies he has left it to us almost as a rule; that is, when he has any character or humour wherein he would show a *coup de Maître*, or his highest skill, he recommends it to your observation by a pleasant description of it before the person first appears. Thus, in *Bartholomew-Fair* he gives you the pictures of Numps and Cokes, and in this those of Daw, Lafoole, Morose, and the Collegiate Ladies; all which you hear described before you see them. So that before they come upon the stage, you have a longing expectation of them, which prepares you to receive them favourably; and when they are there, even from their first appearance you are so far acquainted with them, that nothing of their humour is lost to you

"I will observe yet one thing further of this admirable plot; the business of it rises in every act. The second is greater than the first; the third than the second; and so forward to the fifth. There too you see, till the very last scene, new difficulties arising to obstruct the action of the play; and when the audience is brought into despair that the business can naturally be effected, then, and not before, the discovery is made. But that the poet might entertain you with more variety all this while, he reserves some new characters to show you, which he opens not till the second and third act; in the second Morose, Daw, the Barber, and Otter; in the third the Collegiate Ladies; all which he moves afterwards in by-walks, or under-plots, as diversions to the main design, lest it should grow tedious, though they are still naturally joined with it, and somewhere or other subservient to it. Thus, like a skilful chess-player, by little and little he draws out his men, and makes his pawns of use to his greater persons.

"If this comedy and some others of his were translated into French prose (which would now be no wonder to them, since Molière has lately given them

<sup>39</sup> "Comedy is believed to require the least pains because it fetches its subjects from common life; but the less indulgence it meets with, the more labour it requires." Horace, *Epist.*, II, i, 168. Smart trans.

plays out of verse, which have not displeased them), I believe the controversy would soon be decided betwixt the two nations, even making them the judges. But we need not call our heroes to our aid. Be it spoken to the honour of the English, our nation can never want in any age such who are able to dispute the empire of wit with any people in the universe. And though the fury of a civil war, and power for twenty years together abandoned to a barbarous race of men, enemies of all good learning, had buried the muses under the ruins of monarchy; yet, with the restoration of our happiness, we see revived poesy lifting up its head, and already shaking off the rubbish which lay so heavy on it. We have seen since his majesty's return, many dramatic poems which yield not to those of any foreign nation, and which deserve all laurels but the English. I will set aside flattery and envy: it cannot be denied but we have had some little blemish either in the plot or writing of all those plays which have been made within these seven years; (and perhaps there is no nation in the world so quick to discern them, or so difficult to pardon them, as ours) yet if we can persuade ourselves to use the candour of that poet, who, though the most severe of critics, has left us this caution by which to moderate our censures—

*ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis  
Offendar maculis—*<sup>40</sup>

if, in consideration of their many and great beauties, we can wink at some slight and little imperfections, if we, I say, can be thus equal to ourselves, I ask no favour from the French. And if I do not venture upon any particular judgement of our late plays, 'tis out of the consideration which an ancient writer gives me: *vivorum, ut magna admiratio ita censura difficilis*:<sup>41</sup> "betwixt the extremes of admiration and malice, 'tis hard to judge uprightly of the living. Only I think it may be permitted me to say, that as it is no lessening to us to yield to some plays, and those not many, of our own nation in the last age, so can it be no addition to pronounce of our present poets, that they have far surpassed all the Ancients, and the modern writers of other countries."

This was the substance of what was then spoken on that occasion; and Lisiideus, I think, was going to reply, when he was prevented thus by Crites. "I am confident," said he, "that the most material things that can be said have been already urged on either side; if they have not, I must beg of Lisiideus that he will defer his answer till another time: for I confess I have a joint quarrel to you both, because you have concluded, without any reason given for it, that rhyme is proper for the stage. I will not dispute how ancient it has been among us to write this way; perhaps our ancestors knew no better

<sup>40</sup> "Where many beauties shine in a poem, I am not offended at little faults." Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 351.

<sup>41</sup> "As admiration for the living (is apt to be) great, criticism of them is difficult." Velleius, *Res Gestae*, II, 36.

till Shakespeare's time. I will grant it was not altogether left by him, and that Fletcher and Ben Jonson used it frequently in their Pastorals, and sometimes in other plays. Farther—I will not argue whether we received it originally from our own countrymen, or from the French; for that is an inquiry of as little benefit, as theirs who, in the midst of the late plague, were not so solicitous to provide against it, as to know whether we had it from the malignity of our own air, or by transportation from Holland. I have therefore only to affirm, that it is not allowable in serious plays; for comedies, I find you already concluding with me. To prove this, I might satisfy myself to tell you, how much in vain it is for you to strive against the stream of the people's inclination; the greatest part of which are prepossessed so much with those excellent plays of Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Ben Jonson, which have been written out of rhyme, that except you could bring them such as were written better in it, and those too by persons of equal reputation with them, it will be impossible for you to gain your cause with them, who will still be judges. This it is to which, in fine, all your reasons must submit. The unanimous consent of an audience is so powerful, that even Julius Caesar (as Macrobius reports of him), when he was perpetual dictator, was not able to balance it on the other side; but when Laberius, a Roman Knight, at his request contended in the *Mime* with another poet, he was forced to cry out, *Etiā favente me victus es, Laberi*.<sup>42</sup> But I will not on this occasion take the advantage of the greater number, but only urge such reasons against rhyme, as I find in the writings of those who have argued for the other way. First, then, I am of opinion that rhyme is unnatural in a play, because dialogue there is presented as the effect of sudden thought: for a play is the imitation of nature; and since no man, without premeditation, speaks in rhyme, neither ought he to do it on the stage. This hinders not but the fancy may be there elevated to an higher pitch of thought than it is in ordinary discourse; for there is a probability that men of excellent and quick parts may speak noble things *extempore*: but those thoughts are never fettered with the numbers or sound of verse without study and therefore it cannot be but unnatural to present the most free way of speaking in that which is the most constrained. For this reason, says Aristotle, 'tis best to write tragedy in that kind of verse which is the least such, or which is nearest prose: and this amongst the Ancients was the Iambic, and with us is blank verse, or the measure of verse kept exactly without rhyme. These numbers therefore are fittest for a play; the others for a paper of verses, or a poem; blank verse being as much below them as rhyme is improper for the drama. And if it be objected that neither are blank verses made *extempore*, yet, as nearest nature, they are still to be preferred. But there are two particular exceptions, which many besides myself have had to verse; by which it will appear yet more plainly how improper it is in plays. And the first of them is grounded on that very reason for which some have commended rhyme; they say, the quickness of repartees in argumentative

<sup>42</sup> "Even with me favoring you, you are beaten, Laberius."

scenes receives an ornament from verse. Now what is more unreasonable than to imagine that a man should not only light upon the wit, but the rhyme too, upon the sudden? This nicking of him who spoke before both in sound and measure, is so great a happiness, that you must at least suppose the persons of your play to be born poets; *Arcades omnes, et cantare pures, et respondere parati*:<sup>13</sup> they must have arrived to the degree of *quicquid conabar dicere*<sup>14</sup>—to make verses almost whether they will or no. If they are anything below this, it will look rather like the design of two, than the answer of one: it will appear that your actors hold intelligence together; that they perform their tricks like fortune-tellers, by confederacy. The hand of art will be too visible in it, against that maxim of all professions—*Ars est celare artem*; that it is the greatest perfection of art to keep itself undiscovered. Nor will it serve you to object, that however you manage it, 'tis still known to be a play; and, consequently, the dialogue of two persons understood to be the labour of one poet. For a play is still an imitation of Nature; we know we are to be deceived, and we desire to be so; but no man ever was deceived but with a probability of truth; for who will suffer a gross lie to be fastened on him? Thus we sufficiently understand that the scenes which represent cities and countries to us are not really such but only painted on boards and canvas; but shall that excuse the ill painters or designment of them? Nay, rather ought they not be laboured with so much the more diligence and exactness, to help the imagination? Since the mind of man does naturally tend to truth; and therefore the nearer anything comes to the imitation of it, the more it pleases

"Thus, you see, your rhyme is incapable of expressing the greatest thoughts naturally, and the lowest it cannot with any grace—for what is more unfitting the majesty of verse, than to call a servant, or bid a door be shut in rhyme? And yet you are often forced on this miserable necessity. But verse, you say, circumscribes a quick and luxuriant fancy, which would extend itself too far on every subject, did not the labour which is required to well-turned and polished rhyme, set bounds to it. Yet this argument, if granted, would only prove that we may write better in verse, but not more naturally. Neither is it able to evince that; for he who wants judgement to confine his fancy in blank verse, may want it as much in rhyme, and he who has it will avoid errors in both kinds. Latin verse was as great a confinement to the imagination of those poets as rhyme to ours; and yet you find Ovid saying too much on every subject. *Nescivit* (says Seneca) *quod bene cessit relinquere*:<sup>15</sup> of which he gives you one famous instance in his description of the deluge:

<sup>13</sup> Virgil has *Arcades ambo* (both), which Dryden here changes to *omnes* (all). "Both young Arcadians, both alike inspired

To sing, and answer as the song requir'd."

*Eclogues*, II, 4. Dryden trans.

<sup>14</sup> "(Of) singing whatever they attempted." Cf. Ovid, *Trist.*, IV, 10, 25.

<sup>15</sup> "He did not know how to leave off where it was proper to." Seneca, *Controverses*, IX, 5.



*Omnia pontus erat, decrant quoque litora ponto.*

Now all was sea, nor had that sea a shore.

Thus Ovid's fancy was not limited by verse, and Virgil needed not verse to have bounded his.

"In our own language we see Ben Jonson confining himself to what ought to be said, even in the liberty of blank verse, and yet Corneille, the most judicious of the French poets, is still varying the same sense an hundred ways, and dwelling eternally on the same subject, though confined by rhyme. Some other exceptions I have to verse; but since these I have named are for the most part already public, I conceive it reasonable they should first be answered"

"It concerns me less than any," said Neander (seeing he had ended), "to reply to this discourse; because when I should have proved that verse may be natural in plays, yet I should always be ready to confess, that those which I have written in this kind come short of that perfection which is required. Yet since you are pleased I should undertake this province, I will do it, though with all imaginable respect and deference, both to that person from whom you have borrowed your strongest arguments, and to whose judgement, when I have said all, I finally submit. But before I proceed to answer your objections, I must first remember you, that I exclude all Comedy from my defence, and next that I deny not but blank verse may be also used; and content myself only to assert, that in serious plays where the subject and characters are great, and the plot unmixed with mirth, which might allay or divert these concerns which are produced, rhyme is there as natural and more effectual than blank verse

"And now having laid down this as a foundation—to begin with Crites—I must crave leave to tell him, that some of its arguments against rhyme reach no farther than, from the faults or defects of ill rhyme, to conclude against the use of it in general. May not I conclude against blank verse by the same reason? If the words of some poets who write in it are either ill chosen, or ill placed, which makes not only rhyme, but all kind of verse in any language unnatural, shall I, for their vicious affectation, condemn those excellent lines of Fletcher, which are written in that kind? Is there anything in rhyme more constrained than this line in blank verse?—*I heaven invoke, and strong resistance make*; where you see both the clauses are placed unnaturally, that is, contrary to the common way of speaking, and that without the excuse of a rhyme to cause it: yet you would think me very ridiculous, if I should accuse the stubbornness of blank verse for this, and not rather the stiffness of the poet. Therefore, Crites, you must either prove that words, though well chosen, and duly placed, yet render not rhyme natural in itself; or that, however natural and easy the rhyme may be, yet it is not proper for a play. If you insist on the former part, I would ask you, what other conditions are required to make rhyme natural in itself, besides an election of apt words, and a right disposition of them? For the due choice of your words expresses your sense

naturally, and the due placing them adapts the rhyme to it. If you object that one verse may be made for the sake of another, though both the words and rhyme be apt, I answer, it cannot possibly so fall out; for either there is a dependence of sense betwixt the first line and the second, or there is none: if there be that connection, then in the natural position of the words the latter line must of necessity flow from the former; if there be no dependence, yet still the due ordering of words makes the last line as natural in itself as the other: so that the necessity of a rhyme never forces any but bad or lazy writers to say what they would not otherwise. 'Tis true, there is both care and are required to write in verse. A good poet never establishes the first line till he has sought out such a rhyme as may fit the sense, already prepared to heighten the second: many times the close of the sense falls into the middle of the next verse, or farther off, and he may often prevail himself of the same advantages in English which Virgil had in Latin—he may break off in the hemistich, and begin another line. Indeed, the not observing these two last things makes plays which are written in verse so tedious: for though, most commonly, the sense is to be confined to the couplet, yet nothing that does *perpetuo tenore fluere*, run in the same channel, can please always. 'Tis like the murmuring of a stream, which not varying in the fall, causes at first attention, at last drowsiness. Variety of cadences is the best rule; the greatest help to the actors, and refreshment to the audience.

"If then verse may be made natural in itself, how becomes it unnatural in a play? You say the stage is the representation of nature, and no man in ordinary conversation speaks in rhyme. But you foresaw when you said this, that it might be answered—neither does any man speak in blank verse, or in measure without rhyme. Therefore you concluded, that which is nearest nature is still to be preferred. But you took no notice that rhyme might be made as natural as blank verse, by the well placing of the words, etc. All the difference between them, when they are both correct, is, the sound in one, which the other wants; and if so, the sweetness of it, and all the advantage resulting from it, which are handled in the Preface to *The Rival Ladies*, will yet stand good. As for the place of Aristotle, where he says, plays should be written in that kind of verse which is nearest prose, it makes little for you; blank verse being properly but measured prose. Now measure alone, in any modern language, does not constitute verse; those of the Ancients in Greek and Latin consisted in quantity of words, and a determinate number of feet. But when, by the inundation of the Goths and Vandals into Italy, new languages were introduced, and barbarously mingled with the Latin, of which the Italian, Spanish, French, and ours—made out of them and the Teutonic—are dialects, a new way of poesy was practised; new, I say, in those countries, for in all probability it was that of the conquerors in their own nations: at least we are able to prove, that the eastern people have used it from all antiquity. This new way consisted in measure or number of feet, and rhyme; the sweetness of rhyme, and observation of accent, supplying the place of quantity in words, which could neither exactly be observed by those Barbarians, who knew not

the rules of it, neither was it suitable to their tongues, as it had been to the Greek and Latin. No man is tied in modern poesy to observe any farther rule in the feet of his verse, but that they be dissyllables; whether Spondee, Trochee, or Iambic, it matters not; only he is obliged to rhyme: neither do the Spanish, French, Italian, or Germans, acknowledge at all, or very rarely, any such kind of poesy as blank verse amongst them. Therefore, at most 'tis but a poetic prose, a *sermo pedestris*; and as such, most fit for comedies, where I acknowledge rhyme to be improper—Farther; as to that quotation of Aristotle, our couplet verses may be rendered as near prose as blank verse itself, by using those advantages I lately named—as breaks in an hemistich, or running the sense into another line—thereby making art and order appear as loose and free as nature: or not tying ourselves to couplets strictly, we may use the benefit of the Pindaric way practised in *The Siege of Rhodes*; where the numbers vary, and the rhyme is disposed carelessly, and far from often chiming. Neither is that other advantage of the ancients to be despised, of changing the kind of verse when they please, with the change of the scene, or some new entrance; for they confine not themselves always to iambics, but extend their liberty to all lyric numbers, and sometimes even to hexameter. But I need not go so far to prove that rhyme, as it succeeds to all other offices of Greek and Latin verse, so especially to this of plays, since the custom of nations at this day confirms it; the French, Italian, and Spanish tragedies are generally written in it; and sure the universal consent of the most civilized parts of world, ought in this, as it does in other customs, to include the rest.

"But perhaps you may tell me, I have proposed such a way to make rhyme natural and consequently proper to plays as is unpracticable; and that I shall scarce find six or eight lines together in any play, where the words are so placed and chosen as is required to make it natural. I answer, no poet need constrain himself at all times to it. It is enough he makes it his general rule; for I deny not but sometimes there may be a greatness in placing the words otherwise; and sometimes they may sound better; sometimes also the variety itself is excuse enough. But if, for the most part, the words be placed as they are in the negligence of prose, it is sufficient to denominate the way practicable; for we esteem that to be such, which in the trial oftener succeeds than misses. And thus far you may find the practice made good in many plays: where you do not, remember still, that if you cannot find six natural rhymes together, it will be as hard for you to produce as many lines in blank verse, even among the greatest of our poets, against which I cannot make some reasonable exception.

"And this, Sir, calls to my remembrance the beginning of your discourse, where you told us we should never find the audience favourable to this kind of writing, till we could produce as good plays in rhyme as Ben Jonson, Fletcher, and Shakespeare had written out of it. But it is to raise envy to the living, to compare them with the dead. They are honoured, and almost adored by us, as they deserve; neither do I know any so presumptuous of themselves as to contend with them. Yet give me leave to say thus much,

without injury to their ashes; that not only we shall never equal them, but they could never equal themselves, were they to rise and write again. We acknowledge them our fathers in wit; but they have ruined their estates themselves, before they came to their children's hands. There is scarce an humour, a character, or any kind of plot, which they have not used. All comes sullied or wasted to us: and were they to entertain this age, they could not now make so plenteous treatments out of such decayed fortunes. This therefore will be a good argument to us, either not to write at all, or to attempt some other way. There is no bays to be expected in their walks: *tentanda via est, quàm me quoque possum tollere humo*.<sup>46</sup>

"This way of writing in verse they have only left free to us; our age is arrived to a perfection in it, which they never knew; and which (if we may guess by what of their we have seen in verse, as *The Faithful Shepherdess*, and *Sad Shepherd*) 'tis probable they never could have reached. For the genius of every age is different; and though ours excel in this, I deny not but to imitate nature in that perfection which they did in prose, is a greater commendation than to write in verse exactly. As for what you have added—that the people are not generally inclined to like this way—if it were true, it would be no wonder, that betwixt the shaking off an old habit, and the introducing of a new, there should be difficulty. Do we not see them stick to Hopkins' and Sternhold's psalms, and forsake those of David, I mean Sandys his translation of them? If by the people you understand the multitude, the *θί πολλοί*, 'tis no matter what they think; they are sometimes in the right, sometimes in the wrong: their judgement is a mere lottery. *Est ubi plebs rectè putat, est ubi peccat*.<sup>47</sup> Horace says it of the vulgar, judging poesy. But if you mean the mixed audience of the populace and the noblesse, I dare confidently affirm that a great part of the latter sort are already favourable to verse; and that no serious plays written since the King's return have been more kindly received by them than *The Siege of Rhodes*, the *Mustapha*, *The Indian Queen*, and *Indian Emperor*.

"But I come now to the inference of your first argument. You said that the dialogue of plays is presented as the effect of sudden thought, but no man speaks suddenly, or *extempore*, in rhyme, and you inferred from thence, that rhyme, which you acknowledge to be proper to epic poesy, cannot equally be proper to dramatic, unless we could suppose all men born so much more than poets, that verses should be made in them, not by them.

"It has been formerly urged by you, and confessed by me, that since no man spoke any kind of verse *extempore*, that which was nearest nature was to be preferred. I answer you, therefore, by distinguishing betwixt what is nearest to the nature of comedy, which is the imitation of common persons

<sup>46</sup> "New ways I must attempt, my grov'ling name to raise aloft . . ." Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 8 Dryden trans.

<sup>47</sup> "There are times when the people think\* rightly, times when they err." Cf. Horace, *Epist.* II, 1, 63, *Interdum vulgus rectum videt, est ubi peccat*.

and ordinary speaking, and what is nearest the nature of a serious play: this last is indeed the representation of nature, but 'tis nature wrought up to a higher pitch. The plot, the characters, the wit, the passions, the descriptions, are all exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them, with proportion to verisimilitude. Tragedy, we know, is wont to image to us the minds and fortunes of noble persons, and portray these exactly; heroic rhyme is nearest nature, as being the noblest kind of modern verse

*Indignatur enim privatis et prope socco  
Dignis carminibus narrari coena Thyestae*<sup>48</sup>

says Horace: and in another place,

*Effutire leves indigna tragoedia versus.*<sup>49</sup>

Blank verse is acknowledged to be too low for a poem, nay more, for a paper of verses; but if too low for an ordinary sonnet, how much more for tragedy, which is by Aristotle, in the dispute betwixt the epic poesy and the dramatic, for many reasons he there alleges, ranked above it?

"But setting this defence aside, your argument is almost as strong against the use of rhyme in poems as in plays; for the epic way is everywhere interlaced with dialogue, or discursive scenes; and therefore you must either grant rhyme to be improper there, which is contrary to your assertion, or admit it into plays by the same title which you have given it to poems. For though tragedy be justly preferred above other, yet there is a great affinity between them, as may easily be discovered in that definition of a play which Lisideus gave us. The *genus* of them is the same—a just and lively image of human nature, in its actions, passions, and traverses of fortune: so is the end—namely, for the delight and benefit of mankind. The characters and persons are still the same, viz., the greatest of both sorts; only the manner of acquainting us with those actions, passions, and fortunes, is different. Tragedy performs it *viva voce*, or by action, in dialogue; wherein it excels the Epic Poem, which does it chiefly by narration, and therefore is not so lively an image of human nature. However, the agreement betwixt them is such, that if rhyme is proper for one, it must be for the other. Verse, 'tis true, is not the effect of sudden thought; but this hinders not that sudden thought may be represented in verse, since those thoughts are such as must be higher than nature can raise them without premeditation, especially to a continuance of them, even out of verse; and consequently you cannot imagine them to have been sudden either in the poet or in the actors. A play, as I have said, to be

<sup>48</sup> "For the banquet of Thyestes should not be narrated in familiar verses, almost proper to comedy" Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 90, *Enim* is substituted for the item of the original, an example of Dryden's clever fitting of his quotations into his sentences, without taking illegitimate liberties with their meanings.

<sup>49</sup> "Tragedy [is] unfit to babble forth light verses." *Ibid.*, 231.

like nature, is to be set above it; as statues which are placed on high are made greater than the life, that they may descend to the sight in their just proportion.

"Perhaps I have insisted too long on this objection; but the clearing of it will make my stay shorter on the rest. You tell us, Crites, that rhyme appears most unnatural in repartees, or short replies: when he who answers (it being presumed he knew not what the other would say, yet) makes up that part of the verse which was left incomplete, and supplies both the sound and measure of it. This, you say, looks rather like the confederacy of two, than the answer of one.

"This, I confess, is an objection which is in every man's mouth, who loves not rhyme: but suppose, I beseech you, the repartee were made only in blank verse, might not part of the same argument be turned against you? For the measure is as often supplied there as it is in rhyme; the latter half of the hemistich as commonly made up, or a second line subjoined as a reply to the former; which anyone leaf in Jonson's plays will sufficiently clear to you. You will often find in the Greek tragedians, and in Seneca, that when a scene grows up into the warmth of repartees, which is the close fighting of it, the latter part of the trimeter is supplied by him who answers; and yet it was never observed as a fault in them by any of the ancient or modern critics. The case is the same in our verse, as it was in theirs; rhyme to us being in lieu of quantity to them. But if no latitude is to be allowed a poet, you take from him not only his licence of *quidlibet audendi*,<sup>50</sup> but you tie him up in a straiter compass than you would a philosopher. This is indeed *Musas colere severiores*.<sup>51</sup> You would have him follow nature, but he must follow her on foot: you have discounted him from his Pegasus. But you tell us, this supplying the last half of a verse, or adjoining a whole second to the former, looks more like the design of two, than the answer of one. Suppose we acknowledge it: how comes this confederacy to be more displeasing to you, than in a dance which is well contrived? You see there the united design of many persons to make up one figure: after they have separated themselves in many petty divisions, they rejoin one by one into a gross: the confederacy is plain amongst them, for chance could never produce anything so beautiful; and yet there is nothing in it that shocks your sight. I acknowledge the hand of art appears in repartee, as of necessity it must in all kind of verse. But there is also the quick and poignant brevity of it (which is an high imitation of nature in those sudden gusts of passion) to mingle with it; and this, joined with the cadency and sweetness of the rhyme, leaves nothing in the soul of the hearer to desire. 'Tis an art which appears but it appears only like the shadowings of painture, which being to cause the rounding of it, cannot be absent; but while that is considered, they are lost: so while we attend to the other beauties of the matter, the care and labour of the rhyme is carried from us, or at least

<sup>50</sup> "Of daring what he wills." Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> "To bestow intense care upon the Muses."

drowned in its own sweetness, as bees are sometimes buried in their honey. When a poet has found the repartee, the last perfection he can add to it, is to put it into verse. However good the thought may be, however apt the words in which 'tis couched, yet he finds himself at a little unrest, while rhyme is wanting: he cannot leave it till that comes naturally, and then is at ease, and sits down contented.

"From replies, which are the most elevated thoughts of verse, you pass to those which are most mean, and which are common with the lowest of household conversation. In these, you say, the majesty of verse suffers. You instance in the calling of a servant, or commanding a door to be shut, in rhyme. This, Crites, is a good observation of yours, but no argument: for it proves no more but that such thoughts should be waived as often as may be, by the address of the poet. But suppose they are necessary in the places where he uses them, yet there is no need to put them into rhyme. He may place them in the beginning of a verse, and break it off, as unfit, when so debased, for any other use: or granting the worst—that they require more room than the hemistich will allow, yet still there is a choice to be made of the best words, and least vulgar (provided they be apt), to express such thoughts. Many have blamed rhyme in general, for this fault, when the poet with a little care might have redressed it. But they do it with no more justice than if English Poesy should be made ridiculous for the sake of the Water Poet's rhymes. Our language is noble, full, and significant; and I know not why he who is master of it may not clothe ordinary things in it as decently as the Latin, if he use the same diligence in his choice of words: *delectus verborum origo est eloquentiæ*.<sup>32</sup> It was the saying of Julius Caesar, one so curious in his, that none of them can be changed but for a worse. One would think *unlock the door*, was a thing as vulgar as could be spoken; and yet Seneca could make it sound high and lofty in his Latin:

*Reserate clusos regii postes liris.*

Set wide the palace gates.

"But I turn from this conception, both because it happens not above twice or thrice in any play that those vulgar thoughts are used; and then too (were there no other apology to be made, yet), the necessity of them, which is alike in all kind of writing, may excuse them. For if they are little and mean in rhyme, they are of consequence such in blank verse. Besides that the great eagerness and precipitation with which they are spoken, makes us rather mind the substance than the dress; that for which they are spoken, rather than what is spoken. For they are always the effect of some hasty concernment, and something of consequence depends on them.

"Thus, Crites, I have endeavoured to answer your objections; it remains only that I should vindicate an argument for verse, which you have gone

<sup>32</sup> "Proper choice of words is the source of eloquence." Cicero, *Brutus*, 72, 253, quoting Caesar.

about to overthrow. It had formerly been said that the easiness of blank verse renders the poet too luxuriant, but that the labour of rhyme bounds and circumscribes an over-fruitful fancy; the sense there being commonly confined to the couplet, and the words so ordered that the rhyme naturally follows them, not they the rhyme. To this you answered, that it was no argument to the question in hand; for the dispute was not which way a man may write best, but which is most proper for the subject on which he writes.

"First, give me leave, Sir, to remember you that the argument against which you raised this objection was only secondary: it was built on this hypothesis—that to write in verse was proper for serious plays. Which supposition being granted (as it was briefly made out in that discourse, by showing how verse might be made natural), it asserted, that this way of writing was an help to the poet's judgement, by putting bounds to a wild overflowing fancy. I think, therefore, it will not be hard for me to make good what it was to prove on that supposition. But you add, that were this let pass, yet he who wants judgement in the liberty of his fancy, may as well show the defect of it when he is confined to verse. for he who has judgement will avoid errors, and he who has it not, will commit them in all kinds of writing.

"This argument, as you have taken it from a most acute person, so I confess it carries much weight in it: but by using the word judgement here indefinitely, you seem to have put a fallacy upon us. I grant, he who has judgement, that is, so profound, so strong, or rather so infallible a judgement, that he needs no helps to keep it always poised and upright, will commit no faults either in rhyme or out of it. And on the other extreme, he who has judgement so weak and crazed that no helps can correct or amend it, shall write scurvily out of rhyme, and worse in it. But the first of these judgements is nowhere to be found, and the latter is not fit to write at all. To speak therefore of judgement as it is in the best poets; they who have the greatest proportion of it, want other helps than from it, within. As for example, you would be loth to say that he who is endued with a sound judgement has no need of History, Geography, or Moral Philosophy, to write correctly. Judgement is indeed the master-workman in a play; but he requires many subordinate hands, many tools to his assistance. And verse I affirm to be one of these; 'tis a rule and line by which he keeps his building compact and even, which otherwise lawless imagination would raise either irregularly or loosely; at least, if the poet commits errors with this help, he would make greater and more without it: 'tis, in short, a slow and painful, but the surest kind of working. Ovid, whom you accuse for luxuriancy in verse, had perhaps been farther guilty of it, had he written in prose. And for your instance of Ben Jonson, who, you say, wrote exactly without the help of rhyme; you are to remember, 'tis only an aid to a luxuriant fancy, which is was not: as he did not want imagination, so none ever said he had, much to spare. Neither was verse then refined so much, to be an help to that age, as it is to ours. Thus then the second thoughts being usually the best, as receiving the maturest digestion from judgement, and the last and most mature product of those thoughts



being artful and laboured verse, it may well be inferred, that verse is a great help to a luxuriant fancy ; and this is what that argument which you opposed was to evince."

Neander was pursuing this discourse so eagerly that Eugenius had called to him twice or thrice, ere he took notice that the barge stood still, and that they were at the foot of Somerset-stairs, where they had appointed it to land. The company were all sorry to separate so soon, though a great part of the evening was already spent ; and stood awhile looking back on the water, upon which the moonbeams played, and made it appear like floating quicksilver : at last they went up through a crowd of French people, who were merrily dancing in the open air, and nothing concerned for the noise of guns which had alarmed the town that afternoon. Walking thence together to the Piazza, they parted there ; Eugenius and Lisideus to some pleasant appointment they had made, and Crites and Neander to their several lodgings.

# PREFACE TO *Fables, Ancient and Modern*

1700

**T**IS WITH a poet, as with a man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the cost beforehand ; but, generally speaking, he is mistaken in his account, and reckons short of the expense he first intended. He alters his mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that convenience more, of which he had not thought when he began. So has it happened to me ; I have built a house, where I intended but a lodge ; yet with better success than a certain nobleman, who, beginning with a dog kennel, never lived to finish the palace he had contrived

From translating the First of Homer's *Iliads*, which I intended as an essay to the whole work, I proceeded to the translation of the Twelfth Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, because it contains, among other things, the causes, the beginning, and ending, of the Trojan war. Here I ought in reason to have stopped ; but the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses lying next in my way, I could not balk 'em. When I had compassed them, I was so taken with the former part of the Fifteenth Book (which is the masterpiece of the whole *Metamorphoses*), that I enjoined myself the pleasing task of rendering it into English. And now I found, by the number of my verses, that they began to swell into a little volume ; which gave me an occasion of looking backward on some beauties of my author, in his former books. There occurred to me the *Hunting of the Boar*, *Cinyras* and *Myrrha*, the good-natured story of *Baucis and Philemon*, with the rest, which I hope I have translated closely enough, and given them the same turn of verse which they had in the original ; and this, I may say without vanity, is not the talent of every poet. He who has arrived the nearest to it, is the ingenious and learned Sandys, the best versifier of the former age ; if I may properly call it by that name, which was the former part of this concluding century. For Spenser and Fairfax both flourished in the reign of Queen Elizabeth ; great masters in our language, and who saw much further into the beauties of our numbers than those who immediately followed them. Milton was the poetical son of Spenser, and Mr. Waller of Fairfax ; for we have our lineal descents and clans as well as other families. Spenser more than once insinuates, that the soul of Chaucer was transfused into his body, and that he was begotten by him two hundred years after his decease. Milton has acknowledged to me, that Spenser was his original ; and many besides myself have heard our famous Waller own that he derived the harmony of his numbers from the *Godfrey of Bulloign* which was turned into English by Mr. Fairfax.

But to return : having done with Ovid for this time, it came into my mind that our old English poet, Chaucer, in many things resembled him, and that with no disadvantage on the side of the modern author, as I shall endeavour

to prove when I compare them ; and as I am, and always have been studious to promote the honour of my native country, so I soon resolved to put their merit to the trial, by turning some of the *Canterbury Tales* into our language, as it is now refined ; for by this means, both the poets being set in the same light, and dressed in the same English habit, story to be compared with story, a certain judgement may be made betwixt them by the reader, without obtruding my opinion on him. Or, if I seem partial to my countryman and predecessor in the laurel, the friends of antiquity are not few ; and besides many of the learned, Ovid has almost all the Beaux, and the whole Fair Sex, his declared patrons. Perhaps I have assumed somewhat more to myself than they allow me, because I have adventured to sum up the evidence ; but the readers are the jury, and their privilege remains entire, to decide according to the merits of the cause ; or, if they please, to bring it to another hearing before some other court. In the meantime, to follow the thrird of my discourse (as thoughts, according to Mr. Hobbes, have always some connection), so from Chaucer I was led to think on Boccace, who was not only his contemporary, but also pursued the same studies ; wrote novels in prose, and many works in verse ; particularly is said to have invented the octave rhyme, or stanza of eight lines, which ever since has been maintained by the practice of all Italian writers who are, or at least assume the title of heroic poets. He and Chaucer, among other things, had this in common, that they refined their mother tongues ; but with this difference, that Dante had begun to file their language, at least in verse, before the time of Boccace, who likewise received no little help from his master Petrarch. But the reformation of their prose was wholly owing to Boccace himself, who is yet the standard of purity in the Italian tongue ; tho' many of his phrases are become obsolete, as in process of time it must needs happen. Chaucer, as you have formerly been told by our learned Mr. Rymer, first adorned and amplified our barren tongue from the Provencal, which was then the most polished of all the modern languages ; but this subject has been copiously treated by that great critic, who deserves no little commendation from us his countrymen. For these reasons of time, and resemblance of genius, in Chaucer and Boccace, I resolved to join them in my present work ; to which I have added some original papers of my own ; which whether they are equal or inferior to my other poems, an author is the most improper judge, and therefore I leave them wholly to the mercy of the reader. I will hope the best, that they will not be condemned ; but if they should, I have the excuse of an old gentleman, who, mounting on horseback before some ladies, when I was present, got up somewhat heavily, but desired of the fair spectators that they would count fourscore and eight before they judged him. By the mercy of God, I am already come within twenty years of his number, a cripple in my limbs, but what decays are in my mind, the reader must determine. I think myself as vigorous as ever in the faculties of my soul, excepting only my memory, which is not impaired to any great degree ; and if I lose not more of it, I have no great reason to complain. What judgement I had, increases rather than diminishes ; and thoughts, such as they are, come

crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject; to run them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose: I have so long studied and practised both, that they are grown into a habit, and become familiar to me. In short, tho' I may lawfully plead some part of the old gentleman's excuse, yet I will reserve it till I think I have greater need, and ask no grains of allowance for the faults of this my present work, but those which are given of course to human frailty. I will not trouble my reader with the shortness of time in which I wrote it, or the several intervals of sickness. They who think too well of their own performances, are apt to boast in their prefaces how little time their works have cost them, and what other business of more importance interfered; but the reader will be as apt to ask the question, why they allowed not a longer time to make their works more perfect? And why they had so despicable an opinion of their judges as to thrust their indigested stuff upon them, as if they deserved no better?

With this account of my present undertaking, I conclude the first part of this discourse: in the second part, as at a second sitting, tho' I alter not the draught, I must touch the same features over again, and change the dead-colouring of the whole. In general, I will only say, that I have written nothing which savours of immorality or profaneness; at least, I am not conscious to myself of any such intention. If there happen to be found an irreverent expression, or a thought too wanton, they are crept into my verses thro' my inadvertency; if the searchers find any in the cargo, let them be staved or forfeited, like counterbanded goods; at least, let their authors be answerable for them, as being but imported merchandise, and not of my own manufacture. On the other side, I have endeavoured to choose such fables, both ancient and modern, as contain in each of them some instructive moral; which I could prove by induction, but the way is tedious, and they leap foremost into sight, without the reader's trouble of looking after them. I wish I could affirm, with a safe conscience, that I had taken the same care in all my former writings; for it must be owned, that supposing verses are never so beautiful or pleasing, yet, if they contain anything which shocks religion or good manners, they are at best what Horace says of good numbers without good sense, *Versus inopes rerum, nugoeque canoroæ*.<sup>1</sup> Thus far, I hope, I am right in court, without renouncing to my other right of self-defence, where I have been wrongfully accused, and my sense wire-drawn into blasphemy or bawdry, as it has often been by a religious lawyer, in a late pleading against the stage; in which he mixes truth with falsehood, and has not forgotten the old rule of calumniating strongly, that something may remain.

I resume the thread of my discourse with the first of my translations, which was the first *Iliad* of Homer. If it shall please God to give me longer life, and moderate health, my intentions are to translate the whole *Ilias*; provided still that I meet with those encouragements from the public, which may enable me to proceed in my undertaking with some cheerfulness. And this I dare assure

<sup>1</sup> "Verses empty of material, trifles of song." Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 322.

the world beforehand, that I have found, by trial, Homer a more pleasing task than Virgil, tho' I say not the translation will be less laborious; for the Grecian is more according to my genius than the Latin poet. In the works of the two authors we may read their manners, and natural inclinations, which are wholly different. Virgil was of a quiet, sedate temper; Homer was violent, impetuous, and full of fire. The chief talent of Virgil was propriety of thoughts, and ornament of words: Homer was rapid in his thoughts, and took all the liberties, both of numbers and of expressions, which his language, and the age in which he lived, allowed him. Homer's invention was more copious, Virgil's more confined; so that if Homer had not led the way, it was not in Virgil to have begun heroic poetry; for nothing can be more evident, than that the Roman poem is but the second part of the *Iliad*; a continuation of the same story, and the persons already formed. The manners of Æneas are those of Hector, superadded to those which Homer gave him. The adventures of Ulysses in the *Odyssey* are imitated in the first Six Books of Virgil's *Æneis*; and tho' the accidents are not the same (which would have argued him of a servile copying, and total barrenness of invention), yet the seas were the same, in which both the heroes wandered; and Dido cannot be denied to be the poetical daughter of Calypso. The six latter Books of Virgil's poem are the four-and-twenty *Iliads* contracted; a quarrel occasioned by a lady, a single combat, battles fought, and a town besieged. I say not this in derogation to Virgil, neither do I contradict anything which I have formerly said in his just praise; for his episodes are almost wholly of his own invention, and the form which he has given to the telling makes the tale his own, even tho' the original story had been the same. But this proves, however, that Homer taught Virgil to design; and if invention be the first virtue of an epic poet, then the Latin poem can only be allowed the second place. Mr. Hobbes, in the preface to his own bald translation of the *Iliad* (studying poetry as he did mathematics, when it was too late), Mr. Hobbes, I say, begins the praise of Homer where he should have ended it. He tells us, that the first beauty of an epic poem consists in diction; that is, in the choice of words, and harmony of numbers; now the words are the colouring of the work, which, in the order of nature, is last to be considered. The design, the disposition, the manners, and the thoughts, are all before it: where any of those are wanting or imperfect, so much wants or is imperfect in the imitation of human life, which is in the very definition of a poem. Words, indeed, like glaring colours, are the first beauties that arise and strike the sight; but, if the draught be false or lame, the figures ill disposed, the manners obscure or inconsistent, or the thoughts unnatural, then the finest colours are but daubing, and the piece is a beautiful monster at the best. Neither Virgil nor Homer were deficient in any of the former beauties; but in this last, which is expression, the Roman poet is at least equal to the Grecian, as I have said elsewhere; supplying the poverty of his language by his musical ear, and by his diligence.

But to return: our two great poets being so different in their tempers, one choleric and sanguine, the other phlegmatic and melancholic; that which

makes them excel in their several ways is, that each of them has followed his own natural inclination, as well in forming the design, as in the execution of it. The very heroes shew their authors: Achilles is hot, impatient, revengeful, *Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer*,<sup>2</sup> etc., Æneas patient, considerate, careful of his people, and merciful to his enemies; ever submissive to the will of Heaven—*Quo fata trahunt retrahuntque, sequamur*.<sup>3</sup>

I could please myself with enlarging on this subject, but am forced to defer it to a fitter time. From all I have said, I will only draw this inference, that the action of Homer, being more full of vigour than that of Virgil, according to the temper of the writer, is of consequence more pleasing to the reader. One warms you by degrees; the other sets you on fire all at once, and never intermits his heat. 'Tis the same difference which Longinus makes betwixt the effects of eloquence in Demosthenes and Tully; one persuades, the other commands. You never cool while you read Homer, even not in the Second Book (a graceful flattery to his countrymen); but he hastens from the ships, and concludes not that book till he has made you an amend by the violent playing of a new machine. From thence he hurries on his action with variety of events, and ends it in less compass than two months. This vehemence of his, I confess, is more suitable to my temper; and, therefore, I have translated his First Book with greater pleasure than any part of Virgil; but it was not a pleasure without pains. The continual agitations of the spirits must needs be a weakening of any constitution, especially in age; and many pauses are required for refreshment betwixt the heats; the *Iliad* of itself being a third part longer than all Virgil's works together.

This is what I thought needful in this place to say of Homer. I proceed to Ovid and Chaucer; considering the former only in relation to the latter. With Ovid ended the golden age of the Roman tongue; from Chaucer the purity of the English tongue began. The manners of the poets were not unlike. Both of them were well-bred, well-natured, amorous, and libertine, at least in their writings; it may be, also in their lives. Their studies were the same, philosophy and philology. Both of them were knowing in astronomy; of which, Ovid's books of the *Roman Feasts*, and Chaucer's *Treatise of the Astrolabe*, are sufficient witnesses. But Chaucer was likewise an astrologer, as were Virgil, Horace, Persius, and Manilius. Both wrote with wonderful facility and dearness; neither were great inventors: for Ovid only copied the Grecian fables, and most of Chaucer's stories were taken from his Italian contemporaries, or their predecessors, Boccace his *Decameron* was first published, and from thence our Englishman has borrowed many of his *Canterbury Tales*: yet that of *Palamon* and *Arcite* was written, in all probability, by some Italian wit, in a former age, as I shall prove hereafter. The tale of *Grizild* was the invention of Petrarch; by him sent to Boccace; from whom it came to Chaucer.

<sup>2</sup> "Energetic, choleric, relentless, violent." Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 121.

<sup>3</sup> "Whither the fates in their round draw us, there let us follow." Virgil, *Aeneid*, V. 709.

*Troilus and Cressida* was also written by a Lombard author, but much amplified by our English translator, as well as beautified; the genius of our countrymen, in general, being rather to improve an invention than to invent themselves, as is evident not only in our poetry, but in many of our manufactures. I find I have anticipated already, and taken up from Boccace before I come to him: but there is so much less behind; and I am of the temper of most kings, who love to be in debt, are all for present money, no matter how they pay it afterwards: besides, the nature of a preface is rambling, never wholly out of the way, nor in it. This I have learned from the practice of honest Montaigne, and return at my pleasure to Ovid and Chaucer, of whom I have little more to say.

Both of them built on the inventions of other men; yet since Chaucer had something of his own, as *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, *The Cock and the Fox*, which I have translated, and some others, I may justly give our countryman the precedence in that part; since I can remember nothing of Ovid which was wholly his. Both of them understood the manners, under which name I comprehend the passions, and, in a larger sense, the descriptions of persons, and their very habits. For an example, I see Baucis and Philemon as perfectly before me, as if some ancient painter had drawn them; and all the pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*, their humours, their features, and the very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with them at the *Tabard* in Southwark. Yet even there, too, the figures of Chaucer are much more lively, and set in a better light; which tho' I have not time to prove, yet I appeal to the reader, and am sure he will clear me from partiality. The thoughts and words remain to be considered in the comparison of the two poets, and I have saved myself one-half of that labour, by owning that Ovid lived when the Roman tongue was in its meridian; Chaucer, in the dawning of our language: therefore that part of the comparison stands not on an equal foot, any more than the diction of Ennius and Ovid, or of Chaucer and our present English. The words are given up, as a post not to be defended in our poet, because he wanted the modern art of fortifying. The thoughts remain to be considered; and they are to be measured only by their propriety; that is, as they flow more or less naturally from the persons described, on such and such occasions. The vulgar judges, which are nine parts in ten of all nations, who call conceits and jingles wit, who see Ovid full of them, and Chaucer altogether without them, will think me little less than mad for preferring the Englishman to the Roman. Yet, with their leave, I must presume to say, that the things they admire are only glittering trifles, and so far from being witty, that in a serious poem they are nauseous, because they are unnatural. Would any man, who is ready to die for love, describe his passion like Narcissus? Would he think of *inopem me copia fecit*,<sup>4</sup> and a dozen more of such expressions, poured on the neck of one another, and signifying all the same thing? If this were wit, was this a time

<sup>4</sup> "Abundance has made me impoverished." Ovid, *Metam.*, III, 466.

to be witty, when the poor wretch was in the agony of death? This is just John Little-wit, in *Bartholomew Fair*, who had a conceit (as he tells you) left him in his misery; a miserable conceit. On these occasions the poet should endeavour to raise pity; but, instead of this, Ovid is tickling you to laugh. Virgil never made use of such machines when he was moving you to commiserate the death of Dido: he would not destroy what he was building. Chaucer makes Arcite violent in his love, and unjust in the pursuit of it; yet, when he came to die, he made him think more reasonably: he repents not of his love, for that had altered his character; but acknowledges the injustice of his proceedings, and resigns Emilia to Palamon. What would Ovid have done on this occasion? He would certainly have made Arcite witty on his deathbed. He had complained he was farther off from possession, by being so near, and a thousand such boyisms, which Chaucer rejected as below the dignity of the subject. They who think otherwise, would, by the same reason, prefer Lucan and Ovid to Homer and Virgil, and Martial to all four of them. As for the turn of words, in which Ovid particularly excels all poets, they are sometimes a fault, and sometimes a beauty, as they are used properly or improperly; but in strong passions always to be shunned, because passions are serious, and will admit not playing. The French have a high value for them; and, I confess, they are often what they call delicate, when they are introduced with judgement; but Chaucer wrote with more simplicity, and follow'd nature more closely than to use them. I have thus far, to the best of my knowledge, been an upright judge betwixt the parties in competition, not meddling with the design nor the disposition of it; because the design was not their own; and in the disposing of it they were equal. It remains that I say somewhat of Chaucer in particular.

In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense; learn'd in all sciences; and, therefore, speaks properly on all subjects. As he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off; a continuance which is practised by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace. One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation, because he could never forgive any conceit which came in his way; but swept like a drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough, but the dishes were ill sorted; whole pyramids of sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men. All this proceeded not from any want of knowledge, but of judgement. Neither did he want that in discerning the beauties and faults of other poets, but only indulged himself in the luxury of writing; and perhaps knew it was a fault, but hoped the reader would not find it. For this reason, tho' he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer; and for ten impressions, which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelve-month; for, as my last Lord Rochester said, tho' somewhat profanely, *Not being of God, he could not stand.*



Chaucer followed nature everywhere, but was never so bold to go beyond her; and there is a great difference of being *poeta* and *nimis poeta*,<sup>5</sup> if we may believe Catullus, as much as betwixt a modest behaviour and affectation. The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us; but 'tis like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata*:<sup>6</sup> they who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical; and it continued so, even in our judgement, if compared with the numbers of Lydgate and Gower, his contemporaries: there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, tho' not perfect. 'Tis true, I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine: but this opinion is not worth confuting; 'tis so gross and obvious an error, that common sense (which is a rule in everything but matters of Faith and Revelation) must convince the reader, that equality of numbers, in every verse which we call *heroic*, was either not known, or not always practised, in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses, which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise. We can only say, that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first. We must be children before we grow men. There was an Ennius, and in process of time a Lucilius, and a Lucretius, before Virgil and Horace; even after Chaucer there was a Spenser, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before Waller and Denham were in being; and our numbers were in their nonage till these last appeared. I need say little of his parentage, life, and fortunes; they are to be found at large in all the editions of his works. He was employed abroad and favoured by Edward the Third, Richard the Second, and Henry the Fourth, and was poet. as I suppose, to all three of them. In Richard's time, I doubt, he was a little dipped in the rebellion of the Commons; and being brother-in-law to John of Ghant, it was no wonder if he followed the fortunes of that family; and was well with Henry the Fourth when he had deposed his predecessor. Neither is it to be admired, that Henry, who was a wise as well as a valiant prince, who claimed by succession, and was sensible that his title was not sound, but was rightfully in Mortimer, who had married the heir of York; it was not to be admired, I say, if that great politician should be pleased to have the greatest Wit of those times in his interests, and to be the trumpet of his praises. Augustus had given him the example. by the advice of Maecenas, who recommended Virgil and Horace to him; whose praises helped to make him popular while he was alive, and after his death have made him precious to posterity. As for the religion of our poet, he seems to have some little bias towards the opinions of Wycliffe, after John of Ghant his patron; somewhat of which appears in the

<sup>5</sup> "Too much of a poet." Martial, III, 44. The reference to Catullus is an error.

<sup>6</sup> "Suited to the ears of that time." Tacitus (Orat., C, 21) has *auribus indicium accommodata*.

tale of *Piers Plowman*; yet I cannot blame him for inveighing so sharply against the vices of the clergy in his age: their pride, their ambition, their pomp, their avarice, their worldly interest, deserved the lashes which he gave them, both in that, and in most of his *Canterbury Tales*. Neither has his contemporary Boccace spared them: yet both those poets lived in much esteem good and holy men in orders; for the scandal which is given by particular priests reflects not on the sacred function. Chaucer's *Monk*, his *Canon*, and his *Friar*, took not from the character of his *Good Parson*. A satirical poet is the check of the laymen on bad priests. We are only to take care, that we involve not the innocent with the guilty in the same condemnation. The good cannot be too much honoured, nor the bad too coarsely used; for the corruption of the best becomes the worst. When a clergyman is whipped, his gown is first taken off, by which the dignity of his order is secured. If he be wrongfully accused, he has his action of slander; and 'tis at the poet's peril if he transgress the law. But they will tell us, that all kind of satire, tho' never so well deserved by particular priests, yet brings the whole order into contempt. Is then the peerage of England anything dishonoured when a peer suffers for his treason? If he be libelled or any way defamed, he has his *scandalum magnatum*<sup>7</sup> to punish the offender. They who use this kind of argument, seem to be conscious to themselves of somewhat which has deserved the poet's lash, and are less concerned for their public capacity than for their private; at least there is pride at the bottom of their reasoning. If the faults of men in orders are only to be judged among themselves, they are all in some sort parties; for, since they say the honour of their order is concerned in every member of it, how can we be sure that they will be impartial judges? How far I may be allowed to speak my opinion in this case, I know not; but I am sure a dispute of this nature caused mischief, abundance betwixt a King of England and an Archbishop of Canterbury; one standing up for the laws of his land, and the other for the honour, as he called it, of God's Church; which ended in the murder of the prelate, and in the whipping of His Majesty from post to pillar for his penance. The learned and ingenious Dr. Drake has saved me the labour of inquiring into the esteem and reverence which the priests have had of old; and I would rather extend than diminish any part of it: yet I must needs say, that when a priest provokes me without any occasion given him, I have no reason, unless it be the charity of a Christian, to forgive him: *prior laesit*<sup>8</sup> is justification sufficient in the civil law. If I answer him in his own language, self-defence, I am sure must be allowed me; and if I carry it further, even to a sharp recrimination, somewhat may be indulged to human frailty. Yet my resentment has not wrought so far, but that I have followed Chaucer, in his character of a holy man, and have enlarged on that subject with some pleasure; reserving to myself the right, if I shall think fit hereafter, to describe another sort of priests, such as are more easily to be found than the Good Parson; such as have given the last

<sup>7</sup> " (Law of) slander extraordinary."

<sup>8</sup> " He gave the first offence."

blow to Christianity in this age, by a practice so contrary to their doctrine. But this will keep cold till another time. In the meanwhile, I take up Chaucer where I left him.

He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better, than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity; their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearn'd, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learn'd. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different: the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook, are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady-Prioress and the broad-speaking gaptoothed Wife of Bath. But enough of this; there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that *here is God's plenty*. We have our forefathers and great grandames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days: their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, tho' they are called by other names than those of Monks, and Friars, and Canons, and Lady Abbesses, and Nuns; for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, tho' everything is altered. May I have leave to do myself the justice (since my enemies will do me none, and are so far from granting me to be a good poet, that they will now allow me so much as to be a Christian, or a moral man), may I have leave, I say, to inform my reader, that I have confined my choice to such tales of Chaucer as savour nothing of immodesty. If I had desired more to please than to instruct, the *Reeve*, the *Miller*, the *Shipman*, the *Merchant*, the *Sumner*. and, above all, the *Wife of Bath*, in the *Prologue* to her Tale, would have procured me as many friends and readers, as there are *beaux* and ladies of pleasure in the town. But I will no more offend against good manners; I am sensible as I ought to be of the scandal I have given my loose writings; and make what reparation I am able, by this public acknowledgement. If anything of this nature, or profaneness, be crept into these poems, I am so far from defending it, that I disown it. *Totum hoc indictum Volo.*<sup>9</sup> Chaucer makes another manner of apology for his broad speaking, and Boccace makes the like; but I will follow neither of them. Our countryman,

<sup>9</sup> "I wish the entirety of it unsaid."

in the end of his *Characters*, before the *Canterbury Tales*, thus excuses the ribaldry, which is very gross in many of his novels:

But firste, I pray you, of your courtesy,  
That ye ne arrete it not my villainy,  
Though that I plainly speak in this mattere,  
To tellen you her words, and eke her chere :  
Ne though I speak her words properly,  
For this ye knowen as well as I,  
Who shall tellen a tale after a man,  
He mote rehearse as nye as ever he can :  
Everich word of it ben in his charge,  
*All speke he, never so rudely, no luge :*  
Or else he mote tellen his tale untrue,  
Or feine things, or find words new :  
He may not spare, altho he were his brother,  
He mote as well say o word as another.  
*Crist* spake himself ful broad in holy Writ,  
And well I wote no villainy is it,  
Eke *Plato* saith, who so can him rede,  
The words mote been cousin to the dede.

Yet if a man should have enquired of Boccace or of Chaucer, what need they had of introducing such characters where obscene words were proper in their mouths, but very undecent to be heard; I know not what answer they could have made; for that reason, such tales shall be left untold by me. You have here a specimen of Chaucer's language, which is so obsolete, that his sense is scarce to be understood; and you have likewise more than one example of his unequal numbers, which were mentioned before. Yet many of his verses consist of ten syllables, and the words not much behind our present English: as for example, these two lines, in the description of the Carpenter's young wife:

Wincing she was, as is a jolly colt,  
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt

I have almost done with Chaucer, when I have answered some objections relating to my present work. I find some people are offended that I have turned these tales into modern English; because they think them unworthy of my pains, and look on Chaucer as a dry, old-fashioned wit, not worth reviving. I have often heard the late Earl of Leicester say, that Mr. Cowley himself was of that opinion; who, having read him over at my Lord's request, declared he had no taste of him. I dare not advance my opinion against the judgement of so great an author; but I think it fair, however, to leave the decision to the public. Mr. Cowley was too modest to set up for a dictator; and being shocked perhaps with his old style, never examined into the death of

his good sense. Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond, and must first be polished, ere he shines. I deny not likewise, that, living in our early days of poetry, he writes not always of a piece; but sometimes mingles trivial things with those of greater moment. Sometimes also, tho' not often, he runs riot, like Ovid, and knows not when he has said enough. But there are more great wits beside Chaucer, whose fault is their excess of conceits, and those ill sorted. An author is not to write all he can, but only all he ought. Having observed this redundancy in Chaucer (as it is an easy matter for a man of ordinary parts to find a fault in one of greater), I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judged unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts. I have presumed further, in some places, and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true luster, for want of words in the beginning of our language. And to this I was the more emboldened, because (if I may be permitted to say it of myself), I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies. Another poet, in another age, may take the same liberty with my writings; if at least they live long enough to deserve correction. It was also necessary sometimes to restore the sense of Chaucer, which was lost or mangled in the errors of the press. Let this example suffice at present: in the story of *Palamon and Arcite*, where the temple of Diana is described, you find these verses, in all the editions of our author:

There saw I *Danè* turned unto a tree,  
I mean not the goddess *Diane*,  
But *Venus* daughter, which that hight *Danè*.

Which, after a little consideration, I knew was to be reformed into this sense, that *Daphne*, the daughter of Peneus, was turned into a tree. I dare not make thus bold with Ovid, lest some future Milbourne should arise, and say, I varied from my author, because I understood him not.

But there are other judges, who think I ought not to have translated Chaucer into English, out of a quite contrary notion: they suppose there is a certain veneration due to his old language; and that it is little less than profanation and sacrilege to alter it. They are farther of opinion, that somewhat of his good sense will suffer in this transfusion, and much of the beauty of his thoughts will infallibly be lost, which appear with more grace in their old habit. Of this opinion was that excellent person, whom I mentioned, the late Earl of Leicester, who valued Chaucer as much as Mr. Cowley despised him. My Lord dissuaded me from this attempt (for I was thinking of it some years before his death), and his authority prevailed so far with me, as to defer my undertaking while he lived, in deference to him: yet my reason was not convinced with what he urged against it. If the first end of a writer be to be understood, then, as his language grows obsolete, his thoughts must grow obscure:

*Multa renascentur, quoe nunc cecidere; cadentque  
Quoe nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,  
Quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi.*<sup>10</sup>

When an ancient word, for its sound and significancy, deserves to be revived, I have that reasonable veneration for antiquity to restore it. All beyond this is superstition. Words are not like landmarks, so sacred as never to be removed; customs are changed, and even statutes are silently repealed, when the reason ceases for which they were enacted. As for the other part of the argument, that his thoughts will lose of their original beauty by the innovation of words; in the first place, not only their beauty, but their being is lost, where they are no longer understood, which is the present case. I grant that something must be lost in all transfusion, that is, in all translations; but the sense will remain, which would otherwise be lost, or at least be maimed, when it is scarce intelligible, and that but to a few. How few are there, who can read Chaucer so as to understand him perfectly? And if imperfectly, then with less profit, and no pleasure. It is not for the use of some old Saxon friends, that I have taken these pains with him: let them neglect my version, because they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes, who understand sense and poetry as well as they, when that poetry and sense is put into words which they understand. I will go farther, and dare to add, that what beauties I lose in some places, I give to others which had them not originally: but in this I may be partial to myself; let the reader judge, and I submit to his decision. Yet I think I have just occasion to complain of them, who because they understand Chaucer, would deprive the greater part of their countrymen of the same advantage, and hoard him up, as misers do their grandam gold, only to look on it themselves, and hinder others from making use of it. In sum, I seriously protest, that no man ever had, or can have, a greater veneration for Chaucer than myself. I have translated some part of his works, only that I might perpetuate his memory, or at least refresh it, amongst my countrymen. If I have alerted him anywhere for the better, I must at the same time acknowledge, that I could have done nothing without him. *Facile est inventis addere*<sup>11</sup> is no great commendation; and I am not so vain to think I have deserved a greater. I will conclude what I have to say of him singly, with this one remark: a lady of my acquaintance, who keeps a kind of correspondence with some authors of the fair sex in France, has been informed by them, that Mademoiselle de Scudery, who is as old as Sibyl, and inspired like her by the same God of Poetry, is at this time translating Chaucer into modern French. From which I gather, that he has been formerly translated into the old Provençal; for how she should come to understand old English, I know not. But the matter of fact being true, it makes me think that there is

<sup>10</sup> "Many words shall revive, which now have fallen off, and many which are now in esteem shall fall off, if it be the will of custom, in whose power is the decision and right and standard of language." Horace, *Art Poet.*, 70, trans. Smart.

<sup>11</sup> "It is easy to add to what has already been invented."

something in it like fatality; that, after certain periods of time, the fame and memory of great wits should be renewed, as Chaucer is both in France and England. If this be wholly chance, 'tis extraordinary; and I dare not call it more, for fear of being taxed with superstition.

Boccace comes last to be considered, who, living in the same age with Chaucer, had the same genius, and followed the same studies. Both wrote novels, and each of them cultivated his mother tongue. But the greatest resemblance of our two modern authors being in their familiar style, and pleasing way of relating comical adventures, I may pass it over, because I have translated nothing from Boccace of that nature. In the serious part of poetry, the advantage is wholly on Chaucer's side; for tho' the Englishman has borrowed many tales from the Italian, yet it appears, that those of Boccace were not generally of his own making, but taken from authors of former ages, and by him only modelled; so that what there was of invention, in either of them, may be judged equal. But Chaucer has refined on Boccace, and has mended the stories, which he has borrowed, in his way of telling; tho' prose allows more liberty of thought, and the expression is more easy when unconfined by numbers. Our countryman carries weight, and yet wins the race at disadvantage. I desire not the reader should take my word, and, therefore, I will set two of their discourses, on the same subject, in the same light, for every man to judge betwixt them. I translated Chaucer first, and, amongst the rest, pitched on *The Wife of Bath's Tale*; not daring, as I have said, to adventure on her Prologue, because 'tis too licentious. There Chaucer introduces an old woman, of mean parentage, whom a youthful knight, of noble blood, was forced to marry, and consequently loathed her. The crone being in bed with him on the wedding-night, and finding his aversion, endeavours to win his affection by reason, and speaks a good word for herself (as who could blame her?), in hope to mollify the sullen bridegroom. She takes her topics from the benefits of poverty, the advantages of old age and ugliness, the vanity of youth, and the silly pride of ancestry and titles, without inherent virtue, which is the true nobility. When I had closed Chaucer, I returned to Ovid, and translated some more of his fables; and, by this time, had so far forgotten *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, that, when I took up Boccace, unawares I fell on the same argument, of preferring virtue to nobility of blood and titles, in the story of *Sigismonda*; which I had certainly avoided, for the resemblance of the two discourses, if my memory had not failed me. Let the reader weigh them both; and, if he thinks me partial to Chaucer, 'tis in him to right Boccace.

I prefer, in our countrymen, far above all his other stories, the noble poem of *Palamon and Arcite*, which is of the epic kind, and perhaps not much inferior to the *Ilias*, of the *Aeneis*. The story is more pleasing than either of them, the manners as perfect, the diction as poetical, the learning as deep and various, and the disposition full as artful: only it includes a greater length of time, as taking up seven years at least; but Aristotle has left undecided the duration of the action; which yet is easily reduced into the compass of year,

by a narration of what preceded the return of Palamon to Athens. I had thought, for the honour of our nation, and more particularly for his, whose laurel, tho' unworthy, I have worn after him, that this story was of English growth, and Chaucer's own: but I was undeceived by Boccace; for, casually looking on the end of his seventh *Giornata*, I found Dioneo (under which name he shadows himself), and Fiametta (who represents his mistress, the natural daughter of Robert, King of Naples), of whom these words are spoken: *Dioneo e Fiametta gran pezza cantarono insieme d' Arcita, e di Palamone*; <sup>12</sup> by which it appears, that this story was written before the time of Boccace; but the name of its author being wholly lost, Chaucer is now become an original; and I question not but the poem has received many beauties, by passing thro' his noble hands. Besides this tale, there is another of his own invention, after the manner of the Provençals, called *The Flower and the Leaf*, with which I was so particularly pleased, both for the invention and the moral, that I cannot hinder myself from recommending it to the reader.

As a corollary to this preface, in which I have done justice to others, I owe somewhat to myself; not that I think it worth my time to enter the lists with one M—, or one B—, but barely to take notice, that such men there are, who have written scurrilously against me, without any provocation. M—, who is in orders, pretends, amongst the rest, this quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul on priesthood: if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his part of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall not be able to force himself upon me for an adversary. I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him. His own translations of Virgil have answered his criticisms on mine. If (as they say, he has declared in print), he prefers the version of Ogleby to mine, the world has made him the same compliment; for 'tis agreed, on all hands, that he writes even below Ogleby. That, you will say, is not easily to be done; but what cannot M— bring about? I am satisfied, however, that, while he and I live together, I shall not be thought the worst poet of the age. It looks as if I had desired him underhand to write so ill against me; but upon my honest word I have not bribed him to do me this service, and am wholly guiltless of his pamphlet. 'Tis true, I should be glad if I could persuade him to continue his good offices, and write such another critique on anything of mine; for I find, by experience, he has a great stroke with the reader, when he condemns any of my poems, to make the world have a better opinion of them. He has taken some pains with my poetry; but nobody will be persuaded to take the same with his. If I had taken to the Church, as he affirms, but which was never in my thoughts, I should have had more sense, if not more grace, than to have turned myself out of my benefice, by writing libels on my parishioners. But his account of my manners and my principles are of a piece with his cavils and his poetry; and so I have done with him for ever.

<sup>12</sup> "Dioneo and Fiametta sang together for a long while of Arcite and of Palamon."



As for the City Bard, or Knight Physician, I hear his quarrel to me is, that I was the author of *Absalom and Achitophel*, which, he thinks, is a little hard on his fanatic patrons in London.

But I will deal the more civilly with his two poems, because nothing ill is to be spoken of the dead; and therefore peace be to the *manes* of his *Arthurs*. I will only say, that it was not for this noble Knight that I drew the plan of an epic poem on *King Arthur*, in my preface to the translation of *Juvenal*. The Guardian Angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage; and therefore he rejected them, as Dares did the whirl-bats of Eryx when they were thrown before him by Entelius: Yet from that preface, he plainly took his hint; for he began immediately upon the story, tho' he had the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it, to traduce me in a libel.

I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine, which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, of immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance. It becomes me not to draw my pen in the defense of a bad cause, when I have so often drawn it for a good one. Yet it were not difficult to prove, that in many places he has perverted my meaning by his glosses, and interpreted my words into blasphemy and bawdry, of which they were not guilty. Besides that, he is too much given to horse-play in his raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plow. I will not say, *the zeal of God's house has eaten him up*; but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility. It might also be doubted, whether it were altogether zeal which prompted him to his rough manner of proceeding; perhaps, it became not one of his function to rake into the rubbish of ancient and modern plays: a divine might have employed his pains to better purpose, than in the nastiness of Plautus and Aristophanes, whose examples as they excuse not me, so it might be possibly supposed that he read them not without some pleasure. They who have written commentaries on those poets, or on Horace, Juvenal, and Martial, have explained some vices, which, without their interpretation, had been unknown to modern times. Neither has he judged impartially betwixt the former age and us.

There is more bawdry in one play of Fletcher's, called *The Custom of the Country*, than in all ours together. Yet this has been often acted on the stage, in my remembrance. Are the times so much more reformed now, than they were five-and-twenty years ago? If they are, I congratulate the amendment of our models. But I am not to prejudice the cause of my fellow poets, tho' I abandon my own defence: they have some of them answered for themselves; and neither they nor I can think Mr. Collier so formidable an enemy, that we should shun him. He has lost ground, at the latter end of the day, by pursuing his point too far, like the Prince of Condé, at the battle of Senneph: from

immoral plays to no plays, *ab abusu and usum, non valet consequentia*.<sup>13</sup> But, being a party, I am not to erect myself into a judge. As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels, that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. B— and M— are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy:

. . . *Demetri, teque Tigelli,*  
*Discipulorum inter jubeo plorare cathedras.*<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "From the abuse to the (proper) use of a thing you can't argue validly."

<sup>14</sup> "I bid you, Demetrius and Tigellius, lament among the chairs of your scholars."

# ALEXANDER POPE

## ESSAY ON CRITICISM

### I

'Tis hard to say if greater want of skill  
Appear in writing or in judging ill ;  
But of the two less dang'rous is th' offence  
To tire our patience than mislead our sense :  
Some few in that, but numbers err in this, 5  
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss ;  
A fool might once himself alone expose,  
Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

'Tis with our judgements as our watches, none  
Go just alike, yet each believes his own. 10  
In Poets as true genius is but rare,  
True Taste as seldom is the Critic's share ;  
Both must alike from Heav'n derive their light,  
These born to judge, as well as those to write.  
Let such teach others who themselves excel, 15  
And censure freely who have written well  
Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,  
But are not Critics to their judgement too ?

Yet, if we look more closely, we shall find  
Most have the seeds of judgement in their mind : 20  
Nature affords at least a glimm'ring light ;  
The lines, tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn right :  
But as the slightest sketch, if justly trac'd,  
Is by ill colouring but the more disgrac'd,  
So by false learning is good sense defac'd : 25  
Some are bewilder'd in the maze of schools,  
And some made coxcombs Nature meant but fools :  
In search of wit these lose their common sense,  
And then turn Critics in their own defence :  
Each burns alike, who can or cannot write, 30  
Or with a Rival's or an Eunuch's spite.  
All fools have still an itching to deride,  
And fain would be upon the laughing side.  
If Maevius scribble in Apollo's spite,  
There are who judge still worse than he can write. 35

Some have at first for Wits, then Poets pass'd;  
 Turn'd Critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last.  
 Some neither can for Wits nor Critics pass,  
 As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass.  
 Those half-learn'd wtlings, num'rous in our isle, 40  
 As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile;  
 Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,  
 Their generation 's so equivocal;  
 To tell 'em would a hundred tongues required,  
 Or one vain wit's, that might a hundred tire. 45

But you who seek to give and merit fame,  
 And justly bear a Critic's noble name,  
 Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,  
 How far your genius, taste, and learning go;  
 Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet, 50  
 And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.

Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,  
 And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit.  
 As on the land while here the ocean gains,  
 In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains, 55  
 Thus in the soul while memory prevails,  
 The solid pow'r of understanding fails;  
 Where beams of warm imagination play,  
 The memory's soft figures melt away.  
 One science only will one genit's fit; 60  
 So vast is art, so narrow human wit;  
 Not only bounded to peculiar arts,  
 But oft in those confin'd to single parts.  
 Like kings we lose the conquests gain'd before,  
 By vain ambition still to make them more; 65  
 Each might his sev'ral province well command,  
 Would all but stoop to what they understand.

First follow Nature, and your judgement frame  
 By her just standard, which is still the same:  
 Unerring Nature, still divinely bright, 70

One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,  
 Life, force, and beauty must to all impart,  
 At once the source, and end, and test of Art.  
 Art from that fund each just supply provides,  
 Works without show, and without pomp presides: 75

In some fair body thus th' informing soul  
 With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole ;  
 Each motion guides, and ev'ry nerve sustains,  
 Itself unseen, but in th' effects remains.  
 Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse, 80  
 Want as much more to turn it to its use ,  
 For wit and judgement often are at strife,  
 Tho' meant each other's aid, like man and wife.  
 'Tis more to guide than spur the Muse's steed,  
 Restrain his fury than provoke his speed. 85  
 The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,  
 Shows most true mettle when you check his course

Those RULES of old, discover'd, not devis'd,  
 Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd :  
 Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd 90  
 By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

Here how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,  
 When to repress and when indulge our flights :  
 High on Parnassus' top her sons she show'd,  
 And pointed out those arduous paths they trod ; 95  
 Held from afar, aloft, th' immortal prize,  
 And urg'd the rest by equal steps to rise.  
 Just precepts thus from great examples giv'n,  
 She drew from them what they deriv'd from Heav'n.  
 The gen'rous Critic fann'd the Poet's fire, 100  
 And taught the world with reason to admire.  
 Then Criticism the Muse's handmaid prov'd,  
 To dress her charms, and make her more below'd :  
 But following wits from that intention stray'd ;  
 Who could not win the mistress, woo'd the maid ; 105  
 Against the Poets their own arms they turn'd,  
 Sure to hate most the men from whom they learn'd.  
 So modern 'Pothecaries, taught the art  
 By Doctors' bills to play the Doctor's part,  
 Bold in the practice of mistaken rules, 110  
 Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools.  
 Some on the leaves of ancient authors prey ;  
 Nor time nor moths e'er spoil'd so much as they :  
 Some drily plain, without invention's aid,  
 Write dull receipts how poems may be made ; 115  
 These leave the sense, their learning to display,  
 And those explain the meaning quite away.

You then whose judgement the right course would steer,  
 Know well each Ancient's proper character ;  
 His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page ; 120  
 Religion, Country, genius of his Age ;  
 Without all these at once before your eyes,  
 Cavil you may, but never criticise.  
 Be Homer's works your study and delight,  
 Read them by day, and meditate by night ; 125  
 Thence form your judgement, thence your maxims bring,  
 And trace the Muses upward to their spring.  
 Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse ;  
 And yet your comment be the Mantuan Muse.

When first young Maro in his boundless mind 130  
 A work t' outlast immortal Rome design'd,  
 Perhaps he seem'd above the critic's law,  
 And but from Nature's fountains scorn'd to draw :  
 But when to examine every part he came,  
 Nature and Homer were, he found, the same. 135  
 Convinc'd, amaz'd, he checks the bold design,  
 And rules as strict his labour'd work confine,  
 As if the Stagirite o'erlook'd each line.  
 Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem ;  
 To copy Nature is to copy them. 140

Some beauties yet no Precepts can declare,  
 For there 's a happiness as well as care.  
 Music resembles Poetry ; in each  
 Are nameless graces which no methods teach,  
 And which a master-hand alone can reach. 145  
 If, where the rules not far enough extend,  
 (Since rules were made but to promote their end)  
 Some lucky Licence answer to the full  
 Th' intent propos'd, that Licence is a rule.  
 Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take, 150  
 May boldly deviate from the common track.  
 Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,  
 And rise to faults true Critics dare not mend ;  
 From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,  
 And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art, 155  
 Which, without passing thro' the judgement, gains  
 The heart, and all its end at once attains.  
 In prospects thus, some objects please our eyes,  
 Which out of nature's common order rise,  
 The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice. 160

But though the Ancients thus their rules invade,  
 (As Kings dispense with laws themselves have made)  
 Moderns, beware! or if you must offend  
 Against the precept, ne'er transgress its End;  
 Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need; 165  
 And have, at least, their precedent to plead;  
 The Critic else proceeds without remorse,  
 Seizes your fame, and puts his laws in force.

I know there are to whose presumptuous thoughts  
 Those freer beauties, ev'n in them, seem faults 170  
 Some figures monstrous and misshap'd appear,  
 Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,  
 Which, but proportion'd to their light or place,  
 Due distance reconciles to form and grace.  
 A prudent chief not always must display 175  
 His pow'rs in equal ranks and fair array,  
 But with th' occasion and the place comply,  
 Conceal his force, nay, seem sometimes to fly.  
 Those oft are stratagems which errors seem,  
 Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream 180

Still green with bays each ancient Altar stands,  
 Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;  
 Secure from Flames, from Envy's fiercer rage,  
 Destructive War, and all-involving Age  
 See, from each clime the learn'd their incense bring!  
 Hear, in all tongues consenting Paeans ring! 186  
 In praise so just let ev'ry voice be join'd,  
 And fill the gen'ral chorus of mankind.  
 Hail, Bards triumphant! born in happier days,  
 Immortal heirs of universal praise! 190  
 Whose honours with increase of ages grow,  
 As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;  
 Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,  
 And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!  
 Oh may some spark of your celestial fire 195  
 The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,  
 (That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights,  
 Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes)  
 To teach vain Wits a science little-known,  
 To admire superior sense, and doubt their own! 200

## II

Of all the Causes which conspire to blind  
 Man's erring judgement, and misguide the mind,  
 What the weak head with strongest bias rules,  
 Is *Pride*, the never-failing vice of fools.  
 Whatever nature has in worth denied, 205  
 She gives in large recruits of needful pride;  
 For as in bodies, thus in souls, we find  
 What wants in blood and spirits swell'd with wind  
 Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,  
 And fills up all the mighty Void of sense: 210  
 If once right reason drives that cloud away,  
 Truth breaks upon us with resistless day.  
 Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,  
 Make use of ev'ry friend—and ev'ry foe.

*A little learning* is a dang'rous thing; 215  
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:  
 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,  
 And drinking largely sobers us again.  
 Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts,  
 In fearless youth we tempt the heights of Arts, 220  
 While from the bounded level of our mind  
 Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;  
 But more advanc'd, behold with strange surprise  
 New distant scenes of endless science rise!  
 So pleas'd at first the tow'ring Alps we try, 225  
 Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky!  
 Th' eternal snows appear already past,  
 And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:  
 But those attain'd, we tremble to survey  
 The growing labours of the lengthen'd way; 230  
 Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes,  
 Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

A perfect Judge will read each work of Wit  
 With the same spirit that its author writ;  
 Survey the Whole, not seek slight faults to find 235  
 Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;  
 Nor lose, for that malignant dull delight,  
 The gen'rous pleasure to be charm'd with Wit.  
 But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow,  
 Correctly cold, and regularly low, 240



That, shunning faults, one quiet tenour keep,  
 We cannot blame indeed—but we may sleep.  
 In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts  
 Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts,  
 'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call, 245  
 But the joint force and full result of all.  
 Thus when we view some well proportion'd dome,  
 (The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!)  
 No single parts unequally surprise,  
 All comes united to th' admiring eyes, 250  
 No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear;  
 The whole at once is bold and regular.

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,  
 Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.  
 In every work regard the writer's End, 255  
 Since none can compass more than they intend;  
 And if the means be just, the conduct true,  
 Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due.  
 As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit,  
 T' avoid great errors must the less commit; 260  
 Neglect the rules each verbal Critic lays,  
 For not to know some trifles is a praise.  
 Most Critics, fond of some subservient art,  
 Still make the Whole depend upon a Part:  
 They talk of principles, but notions prize, 265  
 And all to one lov'd Folly sacrifice.

Once on a time La Mancha's Knight, they say,  
 A certain bard encount'ring on the way,  
 Discours'd in terms as just, with looks as sage,  
 As e'er could Dennis, of the Grecian stage; 270  
 Concluding all were desp'rate sots and fools,  
 Who durst depart from Aristotle's rules.  
 Our Author, happy in a judge so nice,  
 Produc'd his play, and begg'd the Knight's advice;  
 Make him observe the subject and the plot, 275  
 The manners, passions, unities; what not?  
 All which, exact to rule, were brought about,  
 Were but a Combat in the lists left out.  
 'What! leave the Combat out?' exclaims the Knight.  
 Yes, or we must renounce the Stagirite. 280  
 'Not so, by Heav'n!' (he answers 'in a rage),  
 'Knights, squires, and steeds must enter on the stage.'

So vast a throng the stage can ne'er contain.  
 'Then build a new, or act it on a plain.'

Thus Critics, of less judgement than caprice, 285  
 Curious, not knowing, not exact, but nice,  
 Form short Ideas, and offend in arts  
 (As most in manners) by a love to parts.

Some to *Conceit* alone their taste confine,  
 And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at ev'ry line; 290  
 Pleas'd with a work where nothing 's just or fit,  
 One glaring Chaos and wild heap of wit.

Poets, like painters, thus unskill'd to trace  
 The naked nature and the living grace,  
 With gold and jewels cover ev'ry part, 295  
 And hide with ornaments their want of art.  
 True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,  
 What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;  
 Something whose truth convinc'd at sight we find,  
 That gives us back the image of our mind. 300  
 As shades more sweetly recommend the light,  
 So modest plainness sets off sprightly wit:  
 For works may have more wit than does 'em good,  
 As bodies perish thro' excess of blood

Others for *Language* all their care express, 305  
 And value books, as women men, for Dress:  
 Their praise is still—the Style is excellent;  
 The Sense they humbly take upon content.  
 Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,  
 Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found. 310  
 False Eloquence, like the prismatic glass,  
 Its gaudy colours spreads on ev'ry place;  
 The face of Nature we no more survey,  
 All glares alike, without distinction gay;  
 But true expression, like th' unchanging Sun, 315  
 Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon;  
 It gilds all objects, but it alters none.  
 Expression is the dress of thought, and still  
 Appears more decent as more suitable;  
 A vile conceit in pompous words express'd 320  
 Is like a clown in regal purple dress'd:  
 For diff'rent styles with diff'rent subjects' sort,  
 As several garbs with country, town, and court.

Some by old words to fame have made pretence,  
 Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense ; 325  
 Such labour'd nothings, in so strange a style,  
 Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile.  
 Unlucky, as Fungoso in the play,  
 These sparks with awkward vanity display  
 What the fine gentleman wore yesterday ; 330  
 And but so mimic ancient wits at best,  
 As apes our grandsires, in their doublets drest.  
 In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,  
 Alike fantastic, if too new or old ;  
 Be not the first by whom the new are try'd, 335  
 Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

But most by Numbers judge a Poet's song,  
 And smooth or rough with them is right or wrong ;  
 In the bright Muse, though thousand charms conspire,  
 Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire , 340  
 Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,  
 Not mend their minds ; as some to Church repair,  
 Not for the doctrine, but the music there.  
 These equal syllables alone require.  
 Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire, 345  
 While expletives their feeble aid do join,  
 And ten low words oft creep in one dull line ;  
 While they ring round the same unvary'd chimes,  
 With sure returns of still expected rhymes ;  
 Where-e'er you find ' the cooling western breeze,' 350  
 In the next line, it ' whispers through the trees ;'  
 If crystal streams ' with pleasing murmurs creep,'  
 The reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with ' sleep' ;  
 Then, at the last and only couplet fraught  
 With some unmeaning thing they call a thought, 355  
 A needless Alexandrine ends the song,  
 That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.  
 Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes, and know  
 What's roundly smooth, or languishingly slow ;  
 And praise the easy vigour of a line 360  
 Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join.  
 True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,  
 As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.  
 'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence ;  
 The sound must seem an Echo to the sense, 365  
 Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,  
 And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows ;

But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,  
 The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar.  
 When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw, 370  
 The line too labours, and the words move slow :  
 Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,  
 Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.  
 Hear how Timotheus' varied lays surprise,  
 And bid alternate passions fall and rise ! 375  
 While at each change the son of Libyan Jove  
 Now burns with glory, and then melts with love ;  
 Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,  
 Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow ;  
 Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found, 380  
 And the world's victor stood subdu'd by Sound !  
 The pow'r of Music all our hearts allow,  
 And what Timotheus was, is Dryden now.

Avoid extremes, and shun the fault of such  
 Who still are pleas'd too little or too much. 385  
 At ev'ry trifle scorn to take offence ;  
 That always shows great pride or little sense :  
 Those heads, as stomachs, are not sure the best  
 Which nauseate all, and nothing can digest  
 Yet let not each gay Turn thy rapture move ; 390  
 For fools admire, but men of sense approve :  
 As things seem large which we through mists descry,  
 Dulness is ever apt to magnify.

Some foreign writers, some our own despise ;  
 The Ancients only, or the Moderns prize. 395  
 Thus Wit, like Faith, by each man is apply'd  
 To one small sect, and all are damn'd beside.  
 Meanly they seek the blessing to confine,  
 And force that sun but on a part to shine,  
 Which not alone the southern wit sublimes, 400  
 But ripens spirits in cold northern climes ;  
 Which from the first has shone on ages past,  
 Enlights the present, and shall warm the last ;  
 Tho' each may feel increases and decays,  
 And see now clearer and now darker days. 405  
 Regard not then if Wit be old or new,  
 But blame the false, and value still the true.

Some ne'er advance a judgement of their own,  
 But catch the spreading notion of the Town ;

They reason and conclude by precedent,  
 And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent. 410  
 Some judge of author's names, not works; and then  
 Nor praise nor blame the writings, but the men.  
 Of all this servile herd, the worst is he  
 That in proud dulness joins with Quality; 415  
 A constant Critic at the great man's board,  
 To fetch and carry nonsense for my Lord.  
 What woeful stuff this madrigal would be  
 In some starv'd hackney sonneteer, or me!  
 But let a Lord once won the happy lines, 420  
 How the wit brightens! how the style refines!  
 Before his sacred name flies ev'ry fault,  
 And each exalted stanza teems with thought!

The Vulgar thus through Imitation err;  
 As oft the Learn'd by being singular; 425  
 So much they scorn the crowd, that if the throng  
 By chance go right, they purposely go wrong  
 So Schismatics the plain believers quit,  
 And are but damn'd for having too much wit.

Some praise at morning what they blame at night,  
 But always think the last opinion right, 431  
 A Muse by these is like a mistress us'd,  
 This hour she's idoliz'd, the next abus'd;  
 While their weak heads, like towns unfortify'd,  
 'Twixt sense and nonsense daily change their side. 435  
 Ask them the cause; they're wiser still, they say;  
 And still tomorrow's wiser still, they say;  
 We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow;  
 Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so.  
 Once School-divines this zealous isle o'er-spread; 440  
 Who knew most sentences was deepest read:  
 Faith, Gospel, all seem'd made to be disputed,  
 And none had sense enough to be confuted.  
 Scotists and Thomists now in peace remain,  
 Amidst their kindred cobwebs in Duck-lane. 445  
 If Faith itself has diff'rent dresses worn,  
 What wonder modes in Wit should take their turn?  
 Oft', leaving what is natural and fit,  
 The current folly proves the ready wit;  
 And authors think their reputation safe, 450  
 Which lives as long as fools are pleas'd to laugh.

Some, valuing those of their own side or mind,  
 Still make themselves the measure of mankind :  
 Fondly we think we honour merit then,  
 When we but praise ourselves in other men. 455  
 Parties in Wit attend on those of State,  
 And public faction doubles private hate.  
 Pride, Malice, Folly, against Dryden rose,  
 In various shapes of Parsons, Critics, Beaus :  
 But sense surviv'd when merry jests were past ; 460  
 For rising merit will buoy up at last.  
 Might he return and bless once more our eyes,  
 New Blackmores and new Milbourns must arise ;  
 Nay, should great Homer lift his awful head,  
 Zoilus again would start up from the dead. 465  
 Envy will merit as its shade pursue,  
 But, like a shadow, proves the substance true ;  
 For envy'd Wit, like Sol eclips'd, makes known  
 Th' opposing body's grossness, not its own.  
 When first that sun too pow'ful beams displays, 470  
 It draws up vapours which obscure its rays ;  
 But ev'n those clouds at last adorn its way,  
 Reflect new glories, and augment the day.  
  
 Be thou the first true merit to befriend ;  
 His praise is lost who stays till all commend 475  
 Short is the date, alas ! of modern rhymes,  
 And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.  
 No longer now that golden age appears,  
 When Patriarch-wits surviv'd thousand years :  
 Now length of Fame (our second life) is lost, 480  
 And bare threescore is all ev'n that can boast :  
 Our sons their fathers' failing language see,  
 And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.  
 So when the faithful pencil has design'd  
 Some bright Idea of the master's mind, 485  
 Where a new world leaps out at his command,  
 And ready Nature waits upon his hand ;  
 When the ripe colours soften and unite,  
 And sweetly melt into just shade and light ;  
 When mellowing years their full perfection give, 490  
 And each bold figure just begins to live,  
 The treach'rous colours the fair art betray,  
 And all the bright creation fades away !  
  
 Unhappy Wit, like most mistaken things,  
 Atones not for that envy which it brings : 495

In youth alone its empty praise we boast,  
 But soon the short-liv'd vanity is lost ;  
 Like some fair flow'r the early spring supplies,  
 That gaily blooms, but ev'n in blooming dies.  
 What is this Wit, which must our cares employ ? 500  
 The owner's wife, that other men enjoy ;  
 Then most our trouble still when most admir'd,  
 And still the more we give, the more requir'd ;  
 Whose fame with pains we guard, but lose with ease,  
 Sure some to vex, but never all to please ; 505  
 'Tis what the vicious fear, the virtuous shun ;  
 By fools it is hated, and by knaves undone !

If Wit so much from Ignorance undergo,  
 Ah let not Learning too commence its foe !  
 Of old those met rewards who could excel, 510  
 And such were prais'd who but endeavour'd well :  
 Tho' triumphs were to gen'als only due,  
 Crowns were reserv'd to grace the soldiers too  
 Now, they who reach Parnassus' lofty crown  
 Employ their pains to spurn some others down ; 515  
 And while self-love each jealous writer rules,  
 Contending wits become the sport of fools ;  
 But still the worst with most regret commend,  
 For each ill Author is as bad a Friend.  
 To what base ends, and by what abject ways, 520  
 Are mortals urg'd thro' sacred lust of praise !  
 Ah! ne'er so dire a thirst of glory boast,  
 Nor in the Critic let the man be lost.  
 Good-nature and good-sense must ever join ;  
 To err is human, to forgive, divine. 525

But if in noble minds some dregs remain,  
 Not yet purg'd off, of spleen and sour disdain,  
 Discharge that rage on more provoking crimes,  
 Nor fear a dearth in these flagitious times.  
 No pardon vile Obscenity should find, 530  
 Tho' wit and art conspire to move our mind ;  
 But Dulness with Obscenity must prove  
 As shameful sure as Impotence in love.  
 In the fat age of pleasure, wealth, and ease,  
 Sprung the rank weed, and thriv'd with large increase ;  
 When love was all an easy Monarch's care ; 536  
 Seldom at council, never in a war ;  
 Jilts rul'd the state, and statesmen farces writ ;

Nay, show'd his faults—but when would Poets mend ?  
 No place so sacred from such fops is barr'd,  
 Nor is Paul's church more safe than Paul's churchyard :  
 Nay, fly to Altars ; there they'll talk you dead,  
 For Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread 625  
 Distrustful sense with modest caution speaks,  
 It still looks home, and short excursions makes ;  
 But rattling nonsense in full volleys breaks,  
 And never shock'd, and never turn'd aside,  
 Bursts out, resistless, with a thund'ring tide. 630

But where's the man who counsel can bestow,  
 Still pleas'd to teach, and yet not proud to know ?  
 Unbiass'd or by favour or by spite,  
 Not duly prepossess'd, nor blindly right ;  
 Tho' learn'd, well-bred, and tho' well-bred, sincere : 635  
 Modestly bold, and humanly severe ;  
 Who to a friend his faults can freely show,  
 And gladly praise the merit of a foe ?  
 Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfin'd,  
 A knowledge both of books and human kind ; 640  
 Gen'rous converse ; soul exempt from pride ;  
 And love to praise, with reason on his side ?

Such once were Critics ; such the happy few,  
 Athens and Rome in better ages knew.  
 The mighty Stagirite first left the shore, 645  
 Spread all his sails, and durst the deeps explore ;  
 He steer'd securely, and discover'd far,  
 Led by the light of the Maeonian Star.  
 Poets, a race long unconfin'd and free,  
 Still fond and proud of savage liberty, 650  
 Receiv'd his laws, and stood convinc'd 'twas fit,  
 Who conquer'd Nature, should preside o'er Wit

Horace still charms with graceful negligence,  
 And without method talks us into sense,  
 Will, like a friend, familiarly convey 655  
 The truest notions in the easiest way.  
 He who, supreme in judgement as in wit,  
 Might boldly censure as he boldly writ,  
 Yet judg'd with coolness, tho' he sung with fire ,  
 His Precepts teach but what his works inspire. 660  
 Our Critics take a contrary extreme,  
 They judge with fury, but they write with phlegm :



Nor suffers Horace more in wrong Translations  
By Wits, than Critics in as wrong Quotations.

See Dionysius Homer's thoughts refine, 665  
And call new beauties forth from ev'ry line!

Fancy and art in gay Petronius please,  
The scholar's learning with the courtier's ease.

In grave Quintilian's copious works, we find 670  
The justest rules and clearest method join'd.  
Thus useful arms in magazines we place,  
All rang'd in order, and dispos'd with grace;  
But less to please the eye than arm the hand,  
Still fit for use, and ready at command.

Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire, 675  
And bless their Critic with a poet's fire:  
An ardent Judge, who, zealous in his trust,  
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just;  
Whose own example strengthens all his laws,  
And is himself that great Sublime he draws. 680

Thus long succeeding Critics justly reign'd,  
Licence repress'd, and useful laws ordain'd.  
Learning and Rome alike in empire grew,  
And Arts still follow'd where her eagles flew;  
From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom, 685  
And the same age saw Learning fall and Rome.  
With Tyranny then Superstition join'd,  
As that the body, this enslav'd the mind;  
Much was believ'd, but little understood,  
And to be dull was constru'd to be good: 690  
A second deluge Learning thus o'er-run:  
And the Monks finish'd what the Goths begun.

At length Erasmus, that great injur'd name,  
(The glory of the Priesthood and the shame!)  
Stemm'd the wild torrent of a barb'rous age, 695  
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.

But see! each Muse in Leo's golden days  
Starts from her trance, and trims her wither'd bays;  
Rome's ancient Genius, o'er its ruins spread,  
Shakes off the dust, and rears his rev'rend head. 700

Then Sculpture and her sister-arts revive ;  
 Stones leap'd to form, and rocks began to live ;  
 With sweeter notes each rising Temple run ;  
 A Raphael painted, and a Vida sung :  
 Immortal Vida ! on whose honour'd brow 705  
 The Poet's bays and Critic's ivy grow ;  
 Cremona now shall ever boast thy name,  
 As next in place to Mantua, next in fame !

But soon by impious arms from Latium chas'd,  
 Their ancient bounds the banish'd Muses pass'd 710  
 Thence Arts o'er all the northern world advance,  
 But Critic-learning flourish'd most in France ;  
 The rules a nation, born to serve, obeys.  
 And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.  
 But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despis'd, 715  
 And kept unconquer'd and unciviliz'd ;  
 Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,  
 We still defy'd the Romans, as of old.  
 Yet some there were, among the sounder few  
 Of those who less presum'd and better knew, 720  
 Who durst assert the juster ancient cause,  
 And her restor'd Wit's fundamental laws  
 Such was the Muse, whose rules and practice tell,  
 " Nature's chief Master-piece is writing well".  
 Such was Roscommon, not more learn'd than good 725  
 With manners gen'rous as his noble blood ;  
 To him the wit of Greece and Rome was known,  
 And ev'ry author's merit but his own.  
 Such late was Walsh—the Muse's judge and friend,  
 Who justly knew to blame or to commend : 730  
 To failings mild, but zealous for desert,  
 The clearest head, and the si: rest heart.  
 This humble praise, lamented shade ! receive ;  
 This praise at least a grateful Muse may give :  
 The Muse, whose early voice you taught to sing, 735  
 Prescrib'd her heights and prun'd her tender wing,  
 (Her guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,  
 But in low numbers short excursions tries ;  
 Content, if hence th' unlearn'd their wants may view  
 The learn'd reflect on what before they knew ; 740  
 Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame ;  
 Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame ;  
 A verse alike to flatter or offend ;  
 Nor free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend

in music—many of his compositions being still to be found—and his reputation in his profession was such that he grew rich and retired to an estate. He had probably more than common literature, as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons, John, the poet, and Christopher, who studied the law, and adhered as the law taught him, to the King's party, for which he was awhile persecuted, but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself so honourably by chamber-practice that soon after the accession of King James he was knighted and made a judge; but his constitution being too weak for business, he retired before any disreputable compliances become necessary.

He had likewise a daughter, Anne, whom he married, with a considerable fortune, to Edward Philips, who came from Shrewsbury, and rose in the Crown Office to be secondary: by him she had two sons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentic account of his domestic manners

John, the poet, was born in his father's house, at the Spread Eagle in Bread-street, December 9, 1608, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education; for he was instructed at first by private tuition under the care of Thomas Young, who was afterwards chaplain to the English merchants at Hamburg, and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary elegy.

He was then sent to St. Paul's School, under the care of Mr. Gill, and removed, in the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's College at Cambridge, where he entered a sizar, February 12, 1624.

He was at this time eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions—a boast of which the learned Politian had given him an example—seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate: many have excelled Milton in their first essays who never rose to works like *Paradise Lost*.

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two Psalms, 144 and 136, which he thought worthy of the public eye; but they raise no great expectations; they would in any numerous school have obtained praise, but not excited wonder.

Many of his elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark, what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classic elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few. Haddon and Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verses than

they provoke derision. If we produced anything worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps Alabaster's *Roxana*.

Of these exercises, which the rules of the university required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they were such as few can form: yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain; but the unkindness with which he was treated was not merely negative. I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last students in either university that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction.

It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, what he was expelled: this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it seems plain from his own verses to Deodati that he had incurred *rustication*—a temporary dismissal into the country, with perhaps the loss of term.

Me tenet urbs reflûa quam Thamæsis alluit undâ,  
 Mequec nec invitum patria dulcis habet.  
 Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revisere Camum,  
 Nec dudum *vetiti* me *laris* angit amor.—

Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,  
 Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.  
 Si sit hoc *exilium* patrias adiisse penates,  
 Et vacuum curis otia grata sequi,  
 Non ego vel *profugi* nomem sortemve recuso,  
 Laetus et *exili* conditione fruor.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindness and reverence can give to the term *vetiti laris*, "a habitation from which he is excluded"; or how *exile* can be otherwise interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring *the threats of a rigorous master, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo*. What was more than threat was probably punishment. This poem, which mentions his *exile*, proves likewise that it was

<sup>1</sup> *Eleg. Liber. 1. 9.* Thus translated by Cowper:

I well content, where Thames with influent tide  
 My native city laves, meantime reside,  
 Nor zeal nor duty now my steps impel  
 to ready Cam, and my forbidden cell.  
 'Tis time that I a pedant's threats disdain,  
 And fly from wrongs my soul will ne'er sustain  
 If peaceful days, in letter'd leisure spent  
 Beneath my father's roof, be banishment,  
 Then call me banish'd, I will ne'er refuse  
 A name expressive of the lot I choose.

Southey's *Cowper*, x. 130

not perpetual; for it concludes with a resolution of returning some time to Cambridge. And it may be conjectured, from the willingness with which he has perpetuated the memory of his exile, that its cause was such as gave him no shame.

He took both the usual degrees; that of Bachelor in 1628, and that of Master in 1632; but he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to Hartlib, supersedes all academical instruction, being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, *till they proceed, as it is called, masters of arts.* And in his *Discourse on the likeliest Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, he ingenuously proposes that *the profits of the lands forfeited by the act for superstitious uses should be applied to such academies all over the land where languages and arts may be taught together: so that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves without tithes by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers.*

One of the objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays, *writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antic and dishonest gestures of Trincalos, buffoons and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court-ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles.*

This is sufficiently peevish in a man who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates with great luxuriance the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays are therefore only criminal when they were acted by academics.

He went to the university with a design of entering into the Church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared that, whoever became a clergyman must "subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that could retch, he must straight perjure himself. He thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."

These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the Articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the Articles which seem to thwart his opinions: but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a settled resolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends who had reproved his suspended and dilatory life, which he seems to have imputed to an insatiable curiosity and fantastic luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him that the delay proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but

from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he goes on, *not taking thought of being late, so it give advantage to be more fit.*

When he left the university he returned to his father, then residing at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years, in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this university is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It might be supposed that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the masque of *Comus*, which was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales, in 1634; and had the honour of being acted by the Earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's *Circe*; but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer:

... a quo ceu fonte perenni  
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis

His next production was *Lycidas*, an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry, and his malignity to the Church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his *Arcades*; for while he lived at Horton he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield [in Middle-sex], the house of the Countess Dowager of Derby, where the *Arcades* made part of a dramatic entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country; and had some purpose of taking chambers in the Inns of Court, when the death of his mother set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent, and Sir Henry Wotton's directions, with the celebrated precept of prudence—*I pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto*; "thoughts close, and looks loose."

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris, where, by the favour of Lord Scudamore, he had the opportunity of visiting Grotius, then residing at the French court as ambassador from Christina of Sweden. From Paris he hasted into Italy, of which he had, with particular diligence, studied the language and literature; and, though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, stayed two months at Florence, where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compositions with such applause as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope that, "by labour and intense study, which," says he, "I take to be my portion in this life, joined with a strong propensity of nature," he might "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die."

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some

contempt of others ; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal : as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that this merit wanted distinction. Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastic inscription, in the tumid lapidary style ; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise ; the rest are perhaps too diffuse on common topics, but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the learned and the great. Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican Library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to Cardinal Barberini ; and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich, and Salsilli in a tetrastic ; neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce ; for the economiums with which Milton repaid Salsilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour.

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems ; though he says he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said *non tam de se, quam supra se*.

At Rome, as at Florence, he stayed only two months ; a time indeed sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures, but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he passed on to Naples, in company of a hermit, a companion from whom little could be expected ; yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manso, Marquis of Villa, who had been before the patron of Tasso. Manso was enough delighted with his accomplishments to honour him with a sorry distich, in which he commends him for everything but his religion ; and Milton, in return, addressed him in a Latin poem, which must have raised a high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visited Sicily and Greece ; but, hearing of the differences between the King and Parliament, he thought it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, though the merchants informed him of plots laid against him by the Jesuits, for the liberty of his conversation on religion. He had sense enough to judge that there was no danger, and therefore kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor shunning controversy. He had perhaps given some offence by visiting Galileo, then a prisoner in the Inquisition for philosophical heresy ; and at Naples he was told by Manso, that, by his declarations on religious questions, he had excluded himself from some distinctions which he should otherwise have paid him. But such conduct, though it did not please,

was yet sufficiently safe, and Milton stayed two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having sent away a collection of music and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy.

Here he reposed, as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Deodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned professors of divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home [August 1639], after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Deodati; a man whom it is reasonable to suppose of great merit, since he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, entitled *Epitaphium Damonis*, written with the common but childish imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Russel, a tailor, in St. Bride's churchyard, and undertook the education of Edward and John Philips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took [1641] a house and garden in Aldersgate street, which was not then so much out of the world as it is now, and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance—on the man who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master; but, since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance was not ample; and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate street, by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of his horse. Every man that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects; such as the Georgic, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement which seems to have busied



many literary projectors of that age Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary college.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and justice are virtues and excellences of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one man may know another half his life without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostatics or astronomy, but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantic or paradoxical; for, if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.

Ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακὸν ἢ ἄγαθόν τε τέτυκται.<sup>2</sup>

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge. Its only genuine product, I believe, is a small *History of Poetry*, written in Latin by his nephew, [Edward] Philips, of which perhaps none of my readers have ever heard.

That in his school, as in everything else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; of which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then, fashionable in Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his breath to blow the flames of contention. In 1641 he published a treatise of

<sup>2</sup> *Odyssey*, iv 392.

*Reformation*, in two books, against the Established Church; being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he says, *inferior to the prelates in learning*.

Hall, Bishop of Norwich, had published an *Humble Remonstrance* in defence of Episcopacy; to which, in 1641, six ministers, of whose names the first letters made the celebrated word *Smectymnus*, gave their Answer. Of this Answer a Confutation was attempted by the learned Usher; and to the Confutation Milton published [1641] a Reply, entitled *Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those testimonies which are alleged to that purpose in some late treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James Lord Bishop of Armagh*. I have transcribed this title to show, by his contemptuous mention of Usher, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners.

His next work was *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty, by Mr. John Milton*, 1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers, and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added, industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compast, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the *Paradise Lost*.

He published the same year two more pamphlets upon the same question. To one of his antagonists, who affirms that he was *vomited out of the university*, he answers, in general terms, "The Fellows of the College wherein I spent some years, at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many times how much better it would content them that I should stay. As for the common approbation or dislike of that place, as now it is, that I should esteem or disesteem myself the more for that, too simple is the answerer, if he think to obtain with me. Of small practice were the physician who could not judge, by what she and her sister have of long time vomited, that the worser stuff she strongly keeps in her stomach, but the better she is ever kecking at, and is queasy; she vomits now out of sickness; but before it will be well with her, she must vomit with strong physic. The university, in the time of her better health, and my younger judgement, I never greatly admired, but now much less."

This is surely the language of a man who thinks that he has been injured. He proceeds to describe the course of his conduct, and the train of his thoughts; and, because he has been suspected of incontinence, gives an account of his own purity: "that if I be justly charged," says he "with this crime, it may come upon me with tenfold shame."

The style of his piece is rough, and such perhaps was that of his antagonist. This roughness he justifies, by great examples, in a long digression.

Sometimes he tries to be humorous: "Lest I should take him for some chaplain in hand, some squire of the body to his prelate, one who serves not at the altar only, but at the Court-cupboard, he will bestow on us a pretty model of himself; and sets me out half a dozen phthisical mottoes, wherever he had them, hopping short in the measure of convulsion fits; in which labour the agony of his wit having escaped narrowly, instead of well-sized periods, he greets us with a quantity of thumb-ring posies. And thus ends this section, or rather dissection, of himself." Such is the controversial merriment of Milton; his gloomy seriousness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, *that hell grows darker at his frown.*

His father, after Reading was taken by Essex [May 1643], came to reside in his house; and his school increased. At Whitsuntide [1643], in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powell, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as Philips relates, "having for a month led a philosophic life (after having been used at home to a great house, and much company and joviality), her friends, possibly incited by her own desire, made earnest suit by letter to have her company the remaining part of the summer, which was granted, on condition of her return at Michaelmas or thereabout."

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife: he pursued his studies; and now and then visited the Lady Margaret Ley, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived, but the lady had no inclination to return to the sullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and therefore very willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer; he sent more with the same success. It could be alleged that letters miscarry; he therefore despatched a messenger, being by this time too angry to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. The family of the lady were Cavaliers.

In a man whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published (in 1644) *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; which was followed [1644] by *The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*; and the next year, his *Tetrachordon, Expositions upon the four chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage.*

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy, who, then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the author should be called before the Lords; "but that House," says Wood, "whether approving the doctrine, or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him."

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor anything by any writer of eminence. The antagonist that appeared is styled by him *a serving man turned solicitor.* Howel in his letters mentions the new doctrine with contempt; and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than

of confutation. He complains of this neglect in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible, and the second not excellent.

From this time it is observed that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest; he loves himself rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the daughter of one Doctor Davis, who was however not ready to comply, they resolved to endeavour a reunion. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough, his relation, "in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand," and at one of his usual visits was surprised to see his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her entreaties for a while; "but partly," says Philips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger and revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends in both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion and a firm league of peace." It were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards received her father and brothers in his own house when they were distressed, with other Royalists.

He published about the same time his *Areopagitica, a Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing*. The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of government which human understanding seems hitherto unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every sceptic in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent the publication of opinions which that society shall think pernicious; but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestic, poetry was never long out of his thoughts.

About this time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away, "and the house again," says Philips, "now looked like a house of the Muses only,

though the accession of scholars was not great. Possibly his proceeding thus far in the education of youth may have been the occasion of some of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and school-master, whereas it is well known he never set up a public school, to teach all the young fry of a parish, but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to relations, and the sons of some gentlemen who were his intimate friends ; besides, that neither his converse nor his writings nor his manner of teaching savoured in the least of pedantry."

Thus laboriously does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confessed without disgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment. This, however, his warmest friends seem not to have found ; they therefore shift and palliate. He did not sell literature to all comers at an open shop ; he was a chamber-milliner, and measured his commodities to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him to this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued ; and, to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour : "He is much mistaken," he says, "if there was not about this time a design of making him Adjutant-General in Sir William Waller's army. But the new-modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design." An event cannot be set at a much greater distance than by having been only *designed, about some time*, if a man *be not much mistaken*. Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer ; for, if Philips be not much mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645) he removed to a smaller house in Holborn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have published anything afterwards till the King's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and *to compose the minds of the people*.

He made some *Remarks on the Articles of Peace, between Ormond and the Irish Rebels*. While he contented himself to write, he perhaps did only what his conscience dictated ; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his own passions and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted and then habitually indulged ; if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced conviction ; he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents. But as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called *Icon Basilike*, which the Council of State, to whom he was now made Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, and imputing it to the King, whom he charges, in his *Iconoclastes*, with the use of this prayer, as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great : "Who would have imagined so little fear in him of the true all-seeing Deity, as, immediately before his death, to pop into the hands

of the grave bishop that attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer stolen word for word from the mouth of a heathen woman praying to a heathen god?"

The papers which the King gave to Dr. Juxon on the scaffold the regicides took away, so that they were at least the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who had examined the question with great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it by adaptation was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse.

King Charles II, being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of polite learning at Leyden, to write a *Defence* of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by excessive praises, been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published *Defensio Regis*.

To this Milton was required to write a sufficient answer, which he performed (1650) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himself with teasing his adversary as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salmasius, whose doctrine he considers as servile and unmanly, to the stream of *Salmacis*, which whoever entered left half his virility behind him. Salmasius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold. *Tu es Gallus*, says Milton, *et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus*. But his supreme pleasure is to tax his adversary, so renowned for criticism, with vicious Latin. He opens his book with telling that he has used *persona*, which, according to Milton, signifies only a *mask*, in a sense not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *person*. But as Nemesis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a solecism by an expression in itself grossly solecistical, when for one of those supposed blunders, he says, as Ker, and I think some one before him, has remarked, *propino te grammatistis tuis vapulandum*. From *vapulo*, which has a passive sense, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them.

Milton when he undertook this answer, was weak of body and dim of sight; but his will was forwarded, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thousand pounds, and his book was much read—for paradox, recommended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he who told every man that he was equal to his King, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch but the tyrant of literature, that almost all mankind was delighted to find him defied and insulted by a new name, not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the *Defence of the People*, her purpose must be to torment Salmasius, who was then at her court; for neither her civil station nor her natural character could dispose them to favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper despotic.

That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man so long accustomed to admiration, a little praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden, from which however he was dismissed, not with any mark of contempt, but with a train of attendance scarcely less than regal.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the Restoration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona*; but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth satire:

. . . Quid agas cum dira et foedior omni  
Crimine *persona* est?

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius' life; and both, perhaps, with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, September 3, 1653; and, as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwell had now dismissed the Parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself, under the title of Protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was lawful, never was pretended; he himself founded his right only in necessity: but Milton, having now tasted the honey of public employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he who justified the murder of his king, for some acts which to him seemed unlawful, should now sell his services and his flatteries to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such that he was not disabled to discharge his office of Latin secretary, or continue his controversies. His mind was too fager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

• About this time [1654] his first wife died in childbed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but, after a short time, married Catherine, the daughter of one Captain Woodcock, of Hackney, a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own. She died, within a year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it; and her husband honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The first reply to Milton's *Defensio Populi* was published in 1651, called *Apologia pro Rege et Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni Angli) defensionem destructivam Regis et Populi*. Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew [John] Philips—under whose name he published [1652] an answer, so much corrected by him that it might be called his own—imputed it to Bramhall; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves at liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.

Next year appeared *Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Coelum*. Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus, or More, a French minister, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton in his *Defensio Secunda* [1654], and overwhelmed by such violence of invective that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated against his malignity, and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second Defence he shows that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery.

"Deserimur, Cromuelle, tu solus superes, ad te summa nostrarum rerum rediit, in te solo consistit, insuperabili tue virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine vel obloquente, nisi qui aequales inaequalis ipse honores sibi quaerit, aut digniori concessos invidet, aut non intelligit nihil esse in societate hominum magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi consentaneum, esse in civitate nihil aequius, nihil utilius, quam potiri rerum dignissimum. Eum to agnoscunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis maximus et gloriosissimus, dux publici consilii, exercitum fortissimorum imperator, pater patriae gessisti. Sic tu spontanea bonorum omnium et animitus missa voce salutaris."

Caesar, when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship, had not more servile or more elegant flattery. A translation may show its servility, but its elegance is less attainable. Having exposed the unskilfulness or selfishness of the former government, "We were left," says Milton.

"To ourselves: the whole national interest fell into your hands, and subsists only in your abilities. To your virtue, overpowering and resistless, every man gives way, except some who, without equal qualifications, aspire to equal honours, who envy the distinctions of merit greater than their own, or who have yet to learn that in the coalition of human society nothing is more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, than that the highest mind



should have the sovereign power. Such, Sir, are you by general confession ; such are the things achieved by you, the greatest and most glorious of our countrymen, the director of our public councils, the leader of unconquered armies, the father of your country ; for by that title does every good man hail you with sincere and voluntary praise."

Next year [1655], having defended all that wanted defence, he found leisure to defend himself. He undertook his own vindication against More, whom he declares in his title to be justly called the author of *Regii Sanguinis clamor*. In this there is no want of vehemence nor eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted wit. "Morus es ? an Momus ? an uterque idem est ?" He then remembers that *Morus* is Latin for a mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation :

. . . Poma alba ferebat  
Quae post nigra tulit Morus.

With this piece ended his controversies ; and he from this time gave himself up to his private studies and his civil employment.

As secretary to the Protector he is supposed to have written the Declaration of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance ; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publicly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition ; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing himself disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and to have resumed three great works which he had planned for his future employment—an epic poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To collect a dictionary seems a work of all others least practicable in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it after he had lost his eyes ; but having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, *almost to his dying-day ; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient that they could not be fitted for the press*. The compilers of the Latin dictionary printed at Cambridge had the use of those collections in three folios ; but what was their fate afterwards is not known.

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible, but with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained ; and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest ; a period at which affairs were not yet very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the subject of his epic poem, after much deliberation, *long choosing*, and beginning late, he fixed upon *Paradise Lost* ; a design so comprehensive that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate

King Arthur, as he hints in his verses to Mansus; but *Arthur was reserved*, says Fenton, *to another destiny*.

It appears, by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscript, and to be seen in a library at Cambridge, that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were anciently called Mysteries; and Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the Sun. These mysteries consist of allégorical persons; such as Justice, Mercy, Faith Of the Tragedy or Mystery of *Paradise Lost* there are two plans:

*The Persons*

Michael  
Chorus of Angels  
Heavenly Love  
Lucifer  
Adam } with the Serpent  
Eve }  
Conscience  
Death  
Labour }  
Sickness } Mutes  
Discontent }  
Ignorance }  
with other }  
Faith  
Hope  
Charity

*The Persons*

Moses  
Divine Justice, Wisdom,  
Heavenly Love  
The Evening Star, Hesperus  
Chorus of Angels  
Lucifer  
Adam  
Eve  
Conscience  
Labour }  
Sickness } Mutes  
Discontent }  
Ignorance }  
Fear }  
Death }  
Faith  
Hope  
Charity

## PARADISE LOST

*The Persons*

Moses *προλογίζει*, recounting how he assumed his true body; that it corrupts not, because it is with God in the mount; declares the like of Enoch and Elijah; besides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds preserve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the sight of God; tells they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence, by reason of their sin.

Justice }  
Mercy } debating what should become of man, if he fall.  
Wisdom }  
Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the Creation.

## ACT II

Heavenly Love.

Evening Star.

Chorus sing the marriage-song, and describe Paradise.

## ACT III

Lucifer contriving Adam's ruin.

Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

## ACT IV

Adam }  
Eve } fallen

Conscience cites them to God's examination.

Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has lost.

## ACT V

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.

... presented by an angel with

Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Pestilence, Sickness, } Mutes  
Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death,

To whom he gives their names. Likewise Winter, Heat, Tempest, etc.

Faith

Hope }  
Charity } comfort him and instruct him.

Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could have produced only an allegory, or mystery. The following sketch seems to have attained more maturity.

## ADAM UNPARADISED

The angel Gabriel either descending or entering ; showing, since his globe was created, his frequency as much on earth as in heaven, describes Paradise. Next, the Chorus, showing the reason of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God ; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man ; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears ; after his overthrow bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs : whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in heaven, against him and his accomplices : as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the Creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and insulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time

been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience, in a shape, accuses him; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the meanwhile, the Chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonishes Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs; at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught.

These are very imperfect rudiments of *Paradise Lost*; but it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct, and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessary previous to poetical excellence; he had made himself acquainted with *seemly arts and affairs*; his comprehension was extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. He was skilful in many languages, and had by reading and composition attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of perusing them.

But while his greater designs were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication, he amused himself, as he could, with little productions. He sent to the press (1658) a manuscript of Raleigh, called the *Cabinet Council*; and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy by a *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church*.

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign; the system of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth: and even in the year of the Restoration he *bated no jot of heart or hope*, but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called *A ready and easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth*; which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealth-men was very remarkable. When the King was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, *Notes* upon a sermon preached by one Griffith, entitled *The Fear of God and the King*. To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in pamphlet petulantly called *No Blind Guides*.

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the King was now about to be restored with the irresistible approbation of the people. He was therefore no longer secretary, and was consequently obliged to quit the house which he held by his office and proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to seek some shelter, and hid himself for a time in Bartholomew-close, by West Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.

The King, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs; and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all except those whom the parliament should except; and the Parliament doomed none to capital punishment but the wretches who had immediately co-operated in the murder of the King. Milton was certainly not one of them; he had only justified what they had done.

This justification was indeed sufficiently offensive; and (June 16) an order was issued to seize Milton's *Defence*, and Goodwin's *Obstructors of Justice*, another book of the same tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors; but Milton was not seized, nor perhaps very diligently pursued.

Not long after (August 19) the flutter of innumerable bosoms was stilled by an act, which the King, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an Act of Oblivion than of Grace. Goodwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for any public trust; but of Milton there was no exception.

Of this tenderness shown to Milton, the curiosity of mankind has not forborne to inquire the reason. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another instance which may confirm Dalrymple's observation, who says, "that whenever Burnet's narrations are examined, he appears to be mistaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his prosecution was ordered: it must be therefore by design that he was included in the general oblivion. He is said to have had friends in the House, such as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges; and undoubtedly a man like him, must have had influence. A very particular story of his escape is told by Richardson in his *Memoirs*, which he received

from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the King and Parliament, Davenant was made prisoner and condemned to die; but was spared at the request of Milton. When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repaid the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account. Betterton's narration can be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Goodwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation; and as exclusion from public trust is a punishment which the power of government can commonly inflict without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion; to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now poor and blind; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature?

The publication of the Act of Oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow-subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence now not known, in the custody of the serjeant in December; and, when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the serjeant were called before the House. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a gripping officer as any other man. How this question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He then removed to Jewin street, near Aldersgate street; and being blind and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestic companion and attendant; and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's family in Cheshire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband: upon what other principles his choice was made, cannot be known; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought back only by terror; the second, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite, but her life was short. The third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his lifetime, and cheated them at his death.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story, he was offered the continuance of his employment, and being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered, "you, like other women, want to ride in your coach; my wish is to live and die an honest man." If he considered the Latin secretary as exercising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority, either with the Parliament or Cromwell, might have forborne to talk very loudly of his

honesty ; and if he thought the office purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the King. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition : large offers and sturdy rejections are among the common topics of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning in all its parts, he gave proof by publishing, the next year (1661), *Accidence commenced Grammar*—a little book which has nothing remarkable but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and was then writing *Paradise Lost*, could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated.

About this time Ellwood the Quaker, being recommended to him as one who would read Latin hymn for the advantage of his conversation, attended him every afternoon, except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that *to read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a hearing as low French*, required that Ellwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation, which, he said, was necessary, if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general ; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin, may soon learn the sound which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey ; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their countries. Ellwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance, for he relates that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read what he did not understand, and would stop him, and *open the most difficult passages*.

In a short time he took a house "in the *Artillery Walk*, leading to *Bunhill Fields*," the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than any other.

He was now busied by *Paradise Lost*. Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorised story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus : *Let the Rainbow be the Fiddlestick of the Fiddle of Heaven*. It has been already shown that the first conception was a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatic work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the King.

He long had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and

the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long choosing, and began late*.

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or mediation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients

Being driven from all public stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity to his retirement; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, *sitting before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth; in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as in his own room, receiving the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality*. His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported by Wood to have visited the house in Bread-street where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, *neatly enough dressed in black clothes, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale, but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hands. He said that if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable*.

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was very remarkable circumstance in the composure of *Paradise Lost*, "which I have a particular reason," says he, "to remember; for whereas I had the perusal of it from the very beginning, for some years, as I went from time to time to visit him in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time (which, being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction as to the orthography and pointing), having, as the summer came on, not been showed any for a considerable while, and desiring the reason thereof, was answered that his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much; so that in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent but half his time therein."

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has mistaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his *Elegies*, declares, that with



the advance of the spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina vires*. To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked ; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that *such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on*. By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependence of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris*. The author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes ; *possunt quia posse videntur*. When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced ; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross-wind, or cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance ; for who can contend with the course of nature ?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that everything was daily sinking by gradual diminution. Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in *an age too late* for heroic poesy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men—an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the *climate* of his country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone ; for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power ; if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which *they should not willingly let die*. However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the

dwindle of posterity. He might still be a giant among the pigmies, the one-eye monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his inquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that "he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an *impetus* or *oestrus*, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number."

These bursts of light, and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanic cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out*. By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter *to secure what came*, may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visitor in disburdening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and, though doubtless true of every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton,

What he has told us, and we cannot now known more, is, that he composed much of his poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verse*. Versification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shows that he had lost his sight; and the Introduction to the seventh, that the return of the King had clouded him with discountenance; and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection; but this, which, when he skulked from the approach of his King, was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him; for no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days, and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compassed round*. This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly

deserved compassion: but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was indeed on *evil days*; the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of *evil tongues* for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton whose warmest advocates must allow that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies or his amusements without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused: they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his King.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont in Bucks; where Elowood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of *Paradise Lost*, and having perused it, said to him, "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*; but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill-fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A licence was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed in the first book, yet the licence was granted; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons, for an immediate payment of 5 l., with a stipulation to receive 5 l. more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition: and again, 5 l. after the sale of the same number of the second edition; and another 5 l. after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertisement, and the argument of the books, were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and tenth; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for 8 l., according to her receipt given December 12, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for 25 l.; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683—half, March 24, 1690 at a price considerably enlarged. In the history of *Paradise Lost* a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary

fame ; and inquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated ? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt ?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the *Paradise Lost* received no public acclamations is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the Court : and who that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides ? All that he himself could think his due, from *evil tongues in evil days*, was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the public. Those who have no power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is at present. To read was not then a general amusement ; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge. Those indeed who professed learning were not less learned than at any other time ; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakespeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately increase ; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years ; for it forced its way without assistance ; its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion ; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few ; the means of proclaiming the publications of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and *Paradise Lost* broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked its reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of sight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account :

Mr. Philips tells us, "that though he had daily about him one or other to read, some persons of man's estate, who, of their own accord, greedily caught at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; others of younger years were sent by their parents to the same end: yet excusing only the eldest daughter, by reason of her bodily infirmity, and difficult utterance of speech (which, to say truth, I doubt was the principal cause of excusing her), the other two were condemned to the performance of reading, and exactly pronouncing of all the languages of whatever book he should, at one time or other, think fit to peruse, viz. the Hebrew (and I think the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish, and French. All which sorts of books to be confined to read, without understanding one word, must needs be a trial of patience almost beyond endurance. Yet it was endured by both for a long time, though the irksomeness of this employment could not be always concealed, but broke out more and more into expressions of uneasiness; so that at length they were all (even the eldest also) sent out to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture, that are proper for women to learn, particularly embroideries in gold or silver."

In this scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented. A language not understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and very seldom so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few likewise would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his *Paradise Lost* he published [1670] his *History of England*, comprising the whole fable of Geoffry of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh; but it has something of rough vigour, which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please.

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and before he could transmit it to the press tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away, lest they should be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of a Long Parliament, and Assembly of Divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the Earl of Anglesea, and which being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.

The same year were printed *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, a tragedy written in imitation of the ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. As these poems were published by another bookseller, it has been asked whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former. Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. Certainly, he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments in 5 l each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton showed *Paradise Regained* to Ellwood, "This," said he, "is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of."

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Ellwood relates, endure to hear *Paradise Lost* preferred to *Paradise Regained*. Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgement of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain; what has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention; and the last work, whatever it be, has necessarily most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitle this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. The epic poet, the controvertiest, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments, now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of logic for the initiation of students in philosophy, and published (1672) *Artis Logicoe plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami Methodum concinnata*; that is, *A new Scheme of Logic, according to the Method of Ramus*. I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the universities; for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published [1673] a *Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery*.

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the Church of England, and an appeal to the Thirty-nine Articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The Papists appeal to other testimonies, and are, therefore, in his opinion, not to be permitted the liberty of either public or private worship; for though they plead conscience, *we have no warrant, he says, to regard conscience which is not grounded in Scripture*.

Those who are not convinced by his reasons may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term *Roman Catholic* is, he says, *one of the Pope's bulls; it is particular universal, or Catholic schismatic*.

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures, a duty from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now [1673] reprinted his juvenile poems, with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of *Familiar Epistles in Latin*, to which, being too few

to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth; but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died, by a quiet and silent expiration, about the 10th of November, 1674, at his house in Bunhill-fields, and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles, at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time [1737] a monument has been erected in Westminster Abbey *To the Author of "Paradise Lost,"* by Mr. Benson, who has in the inscription bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be *soli Miltono secundus*, was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being author of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the change of public opinion," said Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have seen erected in the church a statue of that man whose name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the fore-top, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroic stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being *short and thick*. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the back-sword, of which he recommends the use in his book on Education.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.

His domestic habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and in his earlier years without delicacy of choice. In his youth he studied late at night; but afterwards changed his hours; and rested in bed from nine to four in the summer, and five in the winter. The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined, then played on the organ and sung, or heard another sing; then studies to six; then entertained his visitors till eight; then supped; and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described; but this even tenor appears attainable only in colleges. He that lives in the world will sometimes have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visitors, of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers, will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early he had something read to him by his bedside; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the parliament; but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met not only with neglect, but *sharp rebuke*; and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he showed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with 200*l.* a year; and had 1000*l.* for his *Defence of the People*. His widow, who after his death retired to Nantwich, in Cheshire, and died about 1729, is said to have reported that he lost 2000*l.* by entrusting it to a scrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the Church, he had grasped an estate of about 60*l.* a year belonging to Westminster Abbey, which, like other shares of the plunder of rebellion, he was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the Excise-Office, were also lost. There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants, being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family 1500*l.*, on which his widow laid hold, and only 100*l.* to each of his daughters.

His literature was unquestionably great. He read all the languages which are considered either as learned or polite: Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and critics; and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands: the margin is sometimes noted; but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the English poets he set most value upon Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite: Shakespeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every skilful reader; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence were different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist. but no poet.

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him—*magis habuit quod fugeret*,



*quam quod sequeretur.* He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants: we know rather what he was not than what he was. He was not of the Church of Rome; he was not of the Church of England.

To be of no Church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had a full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; omitting public prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought upon a supposition, which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that *a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is surely very shallow policy that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expense of a Court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffic, for which money is circulated without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the State, and prelates in the Church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character in domestic relations is that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister, first married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married Mr. [Thomas] Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the Crown Office. She had by her first husband Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and by her second two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catherine, and a son, Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the Crown Office, and left a daughter living in 1749, in Grosvenor-street.

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clarke, a weaver in Spitalfields, and lived seventy-six years, to August 1727. This is the daughter of whom public mention has been made. She could repeat the fine lines of Homer, the *Metamorphoses*, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in memory lines not understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often? These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and, as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial lines to be read at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment, but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters, but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spitalfields, and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at hollow-way, and afterwards in Cock-lane, near Shoreditch church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write and, in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, Comus was played [at Drury Lane] for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only 130l., though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and 20l. were given by Tonson, a man who is to be praised as often as he is named. Of this sum 100l. were placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband in whose name it should be entered; and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Islington. This was the greatest benefaction that *Paradise Lost* ever procured the author's descendants; and to

this he who has now attempted to relate his life had the honour of contributing a prologue.

In the examination of Milton's poetical works I shall pay so much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable; what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the public an unfinished poem, which he broke off because he was *nothing satisfied with what he had done*, supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a critic; but I have heard them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excel the odes; and some of the exercises on *Gunpowder Treason* might have been spared.

The English poems, though they make no promises of *Paradise Lost*, have this evidence of genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence: if they differ from verses of others, they differ for the worse; for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness; the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleasing; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously sought, and violently applied.

That in early parts of his life he wrote with much care appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such relics show how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with ease we must learn first to do with diligence.

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet sometimes force their own judgement into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness; he was a *lion* that had no skill *in dandling the kid*.

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas*, of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers displeasing. What beauty there is we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough *satyrs* and *fauns with cloven heel*. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting; whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted, and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey, that they studied

together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?

We drove a field, and both together heard  
 What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,  
 Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote that it is never sought because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks, and copses, and flowers, appear the heathen deities—Jove and Phoebus, Neptune and Ælus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lyciads, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy, he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskillful; but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure had he not known its author.

Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, I believe opinion is uniform; every man that reads them reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks, *not unseen*, to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milkmaid, and view the labours of the ploughman and the mower; than casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of palsy, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by *glowing embers*, or by a lonely lamp outwatches the north star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes of tragic and an epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some music played by aerial performers.

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary. silent inhabitants of the breast, that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

The man of *cheerfulness*, having exhausted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendour gay assemblies and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson or the wild dramas of Shakespeare are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The *pensive* man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the Church.

Both his characters delight in music; but he seems to think that cheerful notes would have obtained from Pluto a complete dismission of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For the old age of Cheerfulness he makes no provision; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life. His cheerfulness is without levity, and his pensiveness without asperity.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected, and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can indeed be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination.

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the *Masque of Comus*, in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgement approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does *Comus* afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to

all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers, who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless Lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This, however, is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatic representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the Spirit is too long—an objection that may be made of almost all the following speeches; they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter, with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the Spirit in form of shepherd, and the Brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and inquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the Brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralizes again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention and detain it.

The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.

The Sonnets were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occasion. They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabric of a sonnet,

however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Those little pieces may be despatched without much anxiety ; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradise Lost* ; a poem which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of critics the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epic poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, much animate by dramatic energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation ; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue ; from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character ; and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined ; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature and realising fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of material modulation.

Bossu is of opinion that the poet's first work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This seems to have been the process only of Milton ; the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent ; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsic. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous ; *to vindicate the ways of God to man* ; to show the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral, there must be a *fable*, a narration artfully constructed, so as to excite curiosity, and surprise expectation. In this part of his work Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it : he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary ; and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epic poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth ; rebellion against the Supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings ; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime ; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures ; their

original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers:

. . . of which the least could wield  
Those elements, and arm him with the force  
Of all their regions;

powers which only the control of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superior, so far as human reason can examine them, or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In the examination of epic poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the *Paradise Lost*, which admit of examination, are those of angels and of man; of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit *the most exalted and most depraved being*. Milton has been censured by Clarke for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth. For there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the greatest difficulties in Milton's undertaking, and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.



To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask; and Innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the Fall the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*, two parts of a vulgar epic poem which immerge the critic in deep consideration, the *Paradise Lost* required little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it displays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being, the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to everything human, some slight exceptions may be made. But the main fabric is immovably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage about all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the *machinery*, so called from *θεὸς ἄπο μηχανῆς*, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topic of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because everything is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of *episodes*, I think there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's prophetic account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was necessary to Adam as a warning, the other as a consolation.

To the completeness or *integrity* of the design nothing can be objected; it has distinctly and clearly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh and ninth books might doubtless be spared; but superfluities so beautiful, who would take away? Or who does not wish that the author of the *Iliad* had gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of himself? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read than those extrinsic paragraphs; and, since the end of poetry is pleasure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleased.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly *one*, whether the poem can be properly termed *heroic*, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgement rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he entitled *Paradise Lost* only a *poem*, yet calls it himself *heroic song*. Dryden, petulently and indecently, denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabric of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

The *sentiments*, as expressive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are for the greater part unexceptionally just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that as it admits no human manners till the Fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the praise of that fortitude with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with the answer returned by Adam, may be confidently opposed to any of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the element, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantic loftiness. He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful; he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are requires a minute attention,

and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility ; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds ; he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw nature, as Dryden expresses it, *through the spectacles of books* ; and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of Enna, where Proserpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like Argo between the Cyanean rocks, or Ulysses between the two Sicilian whirlpools, when the shunned Charybdis on the *larboard*. The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their vanity ; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His similes are less numerous and more various than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison : his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets ; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The ancient epic poets, wanting the light of revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue : their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence ; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From the Italian writers it appears that the advantages of even Christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known ; and though the *Deliverance of Jerusalem* may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought and purity of manners except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits ; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two ; but those two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable

after it for repentance and submission. In their first state their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they show how discord begins in mutual frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance, how confidence of the Divine favour is forfeited by sin, and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and prayer. A state of innocence we can only conceive, if indeed in our present misery it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offending being we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors in their first state conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation *the port of mean suitors*; and they rise again to reverential regard when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the *Paradise Lost* little opportunity for the pathetic; but what little there is has not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrors attending the sense of the Divine displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of *Paradise Lost*—for faults and defects every work of man must have—it is the business of impartial criticism to discover. As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps better skilled in grammar than poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser, whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ; a supposition rash and groundless if he thought it true, and vile and pernicious if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.

The plan of *Paradise Lost* has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be by any effort of imagination place himself; he has therefore little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences; we have restless and insidious enemies in the fallen angels, and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the redemption of mankind we hope to be included; in the description of heaven and hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horror or bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new ; they have been taught to our infancy ; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversation, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind ; what we knew before, we cannot learn ; what is not unexpected, cannot surprise.

Of the idea suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association ; and from others we shrink with horror, or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terror are indeed the genuine sources of poetry ; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive, and poetical terror such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit ; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical positions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetic operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius ; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgement to digest, and fancy to combine them : Milton was able to select from nature, or from story, from an ancient fable, or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and exalted by imagination.

It has been therefore said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts, that in reading *Paradise Lost* we read a book of universal knowledge

But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation, we desert our master and seek for companions.

Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action ; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This, being necessary, was therefore defensible ; and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has unhappily

perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the *burning marle*, he has a body; when, in his passage between hell and the new world, his is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of rising vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toads, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he *starts up in his own shape*, he has at least a determined form; and when he is brought before Gabriel, he has a *spear and a shield*, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandaemonium, being *incorporeal spirits*, are at large, though without number, in a limited space: yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, *crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning*. This likewise happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown the sooner for their arms, for *unarmed they might easily as spirits have evaded by contraction or remove*. Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual; for *contraction and remove* are images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have escaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sunbeam, is material; Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven fills it with incongruity; and the book in which it is related is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.

After the operation of immaterial agents, which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons, which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office, and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general, or perches on a standard; but Fame and Victory can do more. To give them any real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity. In the *Prometheus* of Æschylus we see Violence and Strength, and in the *Alcestis* of Euripides we see Death brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the fortress of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That Sin and Death should have shown the way to hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the

residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and order by a chaotic waste and an unoccupied vacuity ; but Sin and Death worked up a *mole of aggravated soil*, cemented with *asphaltus* ; a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem ; and to this there was no temptation but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objection may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels ; yet Satan mentions it as a report *rife in heaven* before his departure.

To find sentiments for the state of innocence was very difficult ; and something of anticipation perhaps is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety ; it is the speech of a man acquainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of *timorous deer* before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say that all the parts are not equal. In every work one part must be for the sake of others ; a palace must have passages ; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed sometimes to revisit earth ; for what other author ever soared to high, or sustained his flight so long ?

Milton, being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them ; and as every man catches something from his companions, his desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the "Paradise of Fools"—a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place

His play on words, in which he delights too often ; his equivocations, which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients ; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art, it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked, and generally censured, and at last bear so little proportion to the whole that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critic.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance *Paradise Lost*, which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull, as less to be censured for want of candour, than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of *Paradise Regained*, the general judgement seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and everywhere instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of *Paradise Lost* could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of *Paradise Regained* is narrow: a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramatic powers. Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

If *Paradise Regained* has been too much depreciated, *Samson Agonistes* has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton that a drama can be praised in which the intermediate parts have neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe.

In this tragedy are however many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramatic writing; he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending, passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach, but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *diction*, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer, and which is so far removed from common use that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surprised by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, says Addison, *sunk under him*. But the truth is that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgement operates freely, neither softened by the beauty nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject; what is shown with greater extent in *Paradise Lost* may be found in *Comus*. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets; the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian, perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at last may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that *he wrote no language*, but has formed what Butler calls a *Babylonish dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous, but made, by exalted genius and extensive learning, the



vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety: he was master of his language in its full extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned.

After his diction, something must be said of his *versification*. The *measure*, he says, *is the English heroic verse without rhyme*. Of this mode he had many examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The Earl of Surrey is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without rhyme; and, besides our tragedies, a few short poems had appeared in blank verse, particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself. These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Trissino's *Italia Liberata*; and, finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better.

*Rhyme*, he says, and says truly, *is no necessary adjunct of true poetry*. But, perhaps, of poetry as a mental operation, metre of music is no necessary adjunct: it is, however, by the music of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and, in languages melodiously constructed with a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another: where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The music of the English heroic line strikes the ear so faintly, that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together; this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few happy readers of Milton who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse*, said an ingenious critic, *seems to be verse only to the eye*.

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the *lapidary style*; has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymers; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epic poem, and therefore owes reverence to that giver and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroic poems, only because it is not the first.

## JOHN DRYDEN 1631-1700

Born at Aldwinkle, in Northamptonshire—Educated at Westminster and Cambridge—His late appearance as a Poet—His first Verses—His Panegyric on Cromwell—His Poem on the Restoration—His first Play—Revival of the Drama—Heroic Plays with Rhyme—Becomes a constant Writer for the Stage—Made Poet Laureate—His Controversy with Settle and Shadwell—Is ridiculed by the Duke of Buckingham in *The Rehearsal*—Is beaten by Bullies hired by the Earl of Rochester—His Political and Religious Satires—Publishes *Absalom and Achitophel*—*The Medal*—*Mac Flecknoe*—Is converted to the Church of Rome—Publishes *The Hind and the Panther*—Loses his Office of Poet Laureate—His Translations from Juvenal, Ovid, and Persius—His Translation of Virgil—*Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, and *Fables*—Death and Burial to Westminster Abbey—Works and Character.

OF THE great poet whose life I am about to delineate, the curiosity which his reputation must excite will require a display more ample than can now be given. His contemporaries, however they revered his genius, left his life unwritten; and nothing therefore can be known beyond what casual mention and uncertain tradition have supplied.

John Dryden was born August 9, 1631, at Aldwinkle, near Oundle, the son of Erasmus Dryden of Tichmarsh, who was the third son of Sir Erasmus Dryden, Baronet, of Canons Ashby. All these places are in Northamptonshire; but the original stock of the family was in the county of Huntingdon.

He is reported by his last biographer, Derrick, to have inherited from his father an estate of two hundred a year, and to have been bred, as was said, an Anabaptist. For either of these particulars no authority is given. Such a fortune ought to have secured him from that poverty which seems always to

have oppressed him; or, if he had wasted it, to have made him ashamed of publishing his necessities. But though he had many enemies, who undoubtedly examined his life with a scrutiny sufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waste of his patrimony. He was, indeed, sometimes reproached for his first religion. I am therefore inclined to believe that Derrick's intelligence was partly true, and partly erroneous.

From Westminster School, where he was instructed as one of the King's scholars by Dr. Busy, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was in 1650 elected to one of the Westminster scholarships at Cambridge.

Of his school performances has appeared only a poem on the death of Lord Hastings, composed with great ambition of such conceits as, notwithstanding the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley still kept in reputation. Lord Hastings died of the smallpox; and his poet has made of the pustules first rosebuds, and then gems; at last exalts them into stars, and says:

No comet need foretell his change drew on,  
Whose corpse might seem a constellation.

At the university he does not appear to have been eager of poetical distinction, or to have lavished his early wit either on fictitious subjects or public occasions. He probably considered that he who proposed to be an author ought first to be a student. He obtained, whatever was the reason, no fellowship in the college. Why he was excluded cannot now be known, and it is vain to guess: had he thought himself injured, he knew how to complain. In the *Life of Plutarch* he mentions his education in the college with gratitude; but in a prologue at Oxford he has these lines:

Oxford to him a dearer name shall be  
Than his own mother-university;  
Thebes did his green, unknowing youth engage;  
He chooses Athens in his riper age.

It was not till the death of Cromwell, in 1658 [September 3], that he became a public candidate for fame, by publishing [1659] *Heroic Stanzas on the late Lord Protector*, which, compared with the verses of Sprat and Waller on the same occasion, were sufficient to raise great expectations of the rising poet.

When the King was restored, Dryden, like the other panegyrists of usurpation, changed his opinion of his profession, and published [1660] *Astræa Redux; a Poem on the happy Restoration and Return of his sacred Majesty King Charles the Second*.

The reproach of inconstancy was on this occasion shared with such numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor disgrace! If he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raised him enemies.

The same year he praised the new King in a second poem on his restoration. In the *Astræa* was the line:

An horrid *stillness* first *invades* the ear,  
And in that silence we the tempest fear—

for which he was persecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deserved. *Silence* is indeed mere privation; and, so considered, cannot *invade*; but privation likewise certainly is *darkness*, and probably *cold*; yet poetry has never been refused the right of ascribing effects or agency to them as to positive powers. No man scruples to say that *darkness* hinders him from his work, or that *cold* has killed the plants. Death is also privation; yet who has made any difficulty of assigning to Death a dart and the power of striking?

In settling the order of his works there is some difficulty; for even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication; the time of writing and publishing is not always the same; nor can the first editions be easily found, if even from them could be obtained the necessary information.

The time at which his first play was exhibited is not certainly known, because it was not printed till it was some years afterwards altered and revived; but since the plays are said to be printed in the order in which they were written, from the dates of some those of others may be inferred; and thus it may be collected, that in 1663, in the thirty-second year of his life, he commenced a writer for the stage; compelled undoubtedly by necessity, for he appears never to have loved that exercise of his genius, or to have much pleased himself with his own dramas.

Of the stage, when he had once invaded it, he kept possession for many years; not, indeed, without the competition of rivals, who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of critics, which was often poignant and often just; but with such a degree of reputation as made him at least secure of being heard, whatever might be the final determination of the public.

His first piece was a comedy called the *Wild Gallant*. He began with no happy auguries; for his performance was so much disapproved that he was compelled to recall it, and change it from its imperfect state to the form in which it now appears, and which is yet sufficiently defective to vindicate the critics.

I wish that there was no necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole series of his dramatic performances; it will be fit, however, to enumerate them, and to take especial notice of those that are distinguished by any peculiarity, intrinsic or concomitant; for the composition and fate of eight-and-twenty dramas include too much of a poetical life to be omitted.

In 1664 he published the *Rival Ladies*, which he dedicated to the Earl of Orrery, a man of high reputation both as a writer and a statesman. In this play he made his essay of dramatic rhyme, which he defends in his dedication

with sufficient certainty of a favourable hearing; for Orrery was himself a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with Sir Robert Howard in the *Indian Queen*, a tragedy in rhyme. The parts which either of them wrote are not distinguished.

The *Indian Emperor* was published in 1667. It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a sequel to Howard's *Indian Queen*. Of this connection notice was given to the audience by printed bills, distributed at the door; an expedient supposed to be ridiculed in the *Rehearsal*, when Bayes tells how many reams he has printed, to instil into the audience some conception of his plot.

In this play is the description of Night, which Rymer has made famous by preferring it to those of all other poets.

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was introduced soon after the Restoration, as it seems by the Earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the Second, who had formed his taste by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote only to please, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his masters' preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.

To this play is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramatic rhyme, in confutation of the preface to the *Duke of Lerma*, in which Sir Robert Howard had censured it.

In 1667 he published *Annus Mirabilis, the Year of Wonders*, which may be esteemed one of his most elaborate works.

It is addressed to Sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a dedication; and, writing to a poet, he has interspersed many critical observations, of which some are common, and some perhaps ventured without much consideration. He began, even now, to exercise the domination of conscious genius, by recommending his own performance: "I am satisfied that as the Prince and General [Rupert and Monk] are incomparably the best subjects I ever had, so what I have written on them is much better than what I have performed on any other. As I have endeavoured to adorn my poem with noble thoughts, so much more to express those thoughts with elocution."

It is written in quatrains, or heroic stanzas of four lines; a measure which he had learned from the *Gondibert* of Davenant, and which he then thought the most majestic that the English language affords. Of this stanza he mentions the incumbrances, increased as they were by the exactness which the age required. It was, throughout his life, very much his custom to recommend his works, by representation of the difficulties that he had encountered, without appearing to have sufficiently considered that where there is not difficulty there is no praise.

There seems to be, in the conduct of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, something that is not now easily to be explained. Dryden,

in his dedication to the Earl of Orrery [1664], had defended dramatic rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays, had [1665] censured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himself [1667] in his *Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry*; Howard, in his preface to the *Duke of Lerma*, animadverted [1668] on the Vindication; and Dryden, in a preface to the *Indian Emperor*, replied [1668] to the Animadversions with great asperity, and almost with contumely. The dedication to this play is dated the year in which the *Annus Mirabilis* was published. Here appears a strange inconsistency; but Langbaine affords some help, by relating that the answer to Howard was not published in the first edition of the play 1667, but was added 1668 when it was afterwards reprinted; and as the *Duke of Lerma* did not appear till 1668, the same year in which the dialogue was published, there was time enough for enmity to grow up between authors, who, writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now so much distinguished, that in 1668 he succeeded Sir William Davenant as poet laureate. The salary of the laureate had been raised in favour of Jonson, by Charles the First, from a hundred marks to one hundred pounds a year and a tierce of wine; a revenue in those days not inadequate to the conveniences of life.

The same year he published his *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, an elegant and instructive dialogue, in which we are told by Prior, that the principal character is meant to represent the Earl of Dorset. This work seems to have given Addison a model for his *Dialogues upon Medals*.

*Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen* (1668), is a tragi-comedy. In the preface he discusses a curious question, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions? and determines very justly, that, of the plan and disposition, and all that can be reduced to principles of science, the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that, in those parts where fancy predominates, self-love may easily deceive. He might have observed, that what is good only because it pleases, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to please.

*Sir Martin Marr-all* (1668) is a comedy, published without preface or dedication, and at first without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like most of the rest, with plagiarism; and observes, that the song is translated from Voiture, allowing however that both the sense and measure are exactly observed.

*The Tempest* (1670) is an alteration of Shakespeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant, "whom," says he, "I found of so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him which he could not suddenly produce a thought extremely pleasant and surprising; and those first thoughts of his, contrary to the Latin proverb, were not always the least happy, and as his fancy was quick, so likewise were the products of it remote and new. He borrowed not of any other, and his imaginations were such as could not easily enter into any other man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of these two powerful minds was, that to Shakespeare's monster Caliban is added a sister-monster Sycorax; and

a woman who in the original play had never seen a man, is in this brought acquainted with a man that had never seen a woman.

*An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer*, a comedy (1671) is dedicated to the illustrious Duke of Newcastle, whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover but a partner of his studies. It is unpleasant to think how many names, once celebrated, are since forgotten. Of Newcastle's work nothing is now known by his *Treatise on Horsemanship*.

The preface seems very elaborately written, and contains many just remarks on the fathers of the English drama. Shakespeare's plots, he says, are in the hundred novels of Cinthio, those of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spanish stories; Jonson only made them for himself. His criticism upon tragedy, comedy, and farce are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of some of his comedies by the example of former writers; which is only to say, that he was not the first nor perhaps the greatest offender. Against those that accused him of plagiarism he alleges a favourable expression of the King: "He only desired that they who accuse me of thefts would steal his plays like mine;" and then relates how much labour he spends in fitting for the English stage what he borrows from others.

*Tyrannic Love, or the Royal Martyr* (1672), was another tragedy in rhyme, conspicuous for many passages of strength and elegance, and many of empty noise and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximum have always the sport of criticism; and were at length 1681, if his own confession may be trusted, the shame of the writer.

Of this play he takes care to let the reader know that it was "contrived and written" in seven weeks. Want of time was often his excuse, or perhaps shortness of time was his private boast in the form of an apology.

It was written before the *Conquest of Granada*, but published after it. The design is to recommend piety. "I considered that pleasure was not the only end of poesy, and that even the instructions of morality were not so wholly the business of a poet, as that precepts and examples of piety were to be omitted. For to leave that employment altogether to the clergy were to forget that religion was first taught in verse, which the laziness or dullness of succeeding priesthood turned afterwards into prose." Thus foolishly could Dryden write rather than not show his malice to the parsons.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden seems to have had his quiet much disturbed by the success of the *Empress of Morocco*, a tragedy written in rhyme by Elkanah Settle; which was so much applauded, as to make him think his supremacy of reputation in some danger. Settle had not only been prosperous on the stage, but, in the confidence of success, had published his play, "with sculptures" and a preface of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and for the last blast of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court ladies.

Dryden could not now repress these emotions, which he called indignation, and others jealousy; but wrote upon the play and the dedication such criticism as malignant impatience could pour out in haste.

Of Settle he gives this character: "He is an animal of a most deplored understanding, without conversation. His being is in a twilight of sense, and some glimmering of thought, which he can never fashion either into wit or English. His style is boisterous and rough-hewn; his rhyme incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. That little talent which he has is fancy. He sometimes labours with a thought; but with the pudder he makes to bring it into the world it is commonly still-born; so that for want of learning and elocution he will never be able to express anything either naturally or justly!"

This is not very decent; yet this is one of the pages in which criticism prevails over brutal fury. He proceeds: "He has a heavy hand at fools, and a great felicity in writing nonsense for them. Fools they will be in spite of him. His King, his two Empresses, his villain, and his sub-villain, nay his hero, have all a certain natural cast of the father. One turn of the countenance goes through all his children: their folly was born and bred in them, and something of the Elkanah will be visible."

This is Dryden's general declamation: I will withhold from the reader a particular remark. Having gone through the first act, he says, "To conclude this act with the most rumbling piece of nonsense spoken yet,

'To flattering lightning our feign'd smiles conform,  
Which back'd with thunder do but gild a storm.'

"Conform a smile to lightning, make a smile imitate lightning, and flattering lightning: lightning sure is a threatening thing. And this lightning must gild a storm. Now if I must conform by smiles of lightning, then my smiles must gild a storm too: to gild with smiles is a new invention of gilding. And gild a storm by being backed with thunder. Thunder is part of the storm; so one part of the storm must help to gild another part, and help by backing; as if a man would gild a thing the better for being backed, or having a load upon his back. So that here is gilding by conforming, smiling, lightning, backing, and thundering. The whole is as if I should say thus: I will make my counterfeit smiles look like a flattering stone-horse, which, being backed with a trooper, does but gild the battle. I am mistaken if nonsense is not here pretty thick sown. Sure the poet writ these two lines aboard some smack in a storm, and, being seasick, spewed up a good lump of clotted nonsense at once."

Here is, perhaps, a sufficient specimen; but as the pamphlet, though Dryden's has never been thought worthy a republication, and is not easily to be found, it may gratify curiosity to quote it more largely:

'Whene'er she bleeds,  
He no severer a damnation needs,  
That dares pronounce the sentence of her death,  
Than the infection that attends that breath.'

"That attends that breath. The poet is 'at breath again; breath can never 'scape him; and here he brings in a breath that must be infectious with



*pronouncing* a sentence ; and his sentence is not to be pronounced till the condemned party *bleeds* ; that is, she must be executed first, and sentenced after ; and the *pronouncing* of the *sentence* will be infectious ; that is, others will catch the disease of that sentence, and this infecting of others will torment a man's self. The whole is thus : *when she bleeds, thou needest no greater hell or torment to thyself than infecting of others by pronouncing a sentence upon her.* What hodgepodge does he make here ! Never was Dutch grout such clogging, thick, indigestible stuff. But this is but a taste to stay the stomach : we shall have a more plentiful mess presently.

"Now to dish up the poet's broth that I promised :

'For when we're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd,  
Of nature's grosser burden we're discharg'd,  
Then gently, as a happy lover's sigh,  
Like wand'ring meteors through the air we'll fly,  
And in our airy walk, as subtle guests,  
We'll steal into our cruel fathers' breasts,  
There read their souls, and track each passion's sphere :  
See how Revenge moves there, Ambition here ;  
And in their orbs view the dark characters  
Of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars.  
We'll blot out all those hideous draughts and write  
Pure and white forms ; then with a radiant light  
Their breasts encircle, till their passions be  
Gentle as nature in its infancy.  
Till soften'd by our charms their furies cease,  
And their revenge resolves into a peace.  
Thus by our death their quarrel ends,  
Whom living we made foes, dead we'll make friends.'

"If this be not a very liberal mess, I will refer myself to the stomach of any moderate guest. And a rare mess it is, far excelling any Westminster white-broth. It is a kind of gibleth porridge, made of the gibleths of a couple of young geese, stodged full of *meteors, orbs, spheres, track, hideous draughts, dark characters, white forms, and radiant lights*, designed not only to please appetite, and indulge luxury, but it is also physical, being an approved medicine to purge choler ; for it is propounded by Morena, as a receipt to cure their fathers of their choleric humours ; and were it written in characters as barbarous as the words, might very well pass for a doctor's bill. To conclude, it is porridge, 'tis I know not what ; for certainly never any one that pretended to write sense had the impudence before to put such stuff as this into the mouths of those that were to speak it before an audience whom he did not take to be all fools ; and after that to print it too, and expose it to the examination of the world. But let us see what we can make of this stuff :

'For when we're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd'—

"Here he tells us what it is to be *dead*; it is to have *our freed souls set free*. Now if to have a soul set free is to be dead, then to have a *freed soul* set free is to have a dead man die.

'Then gentle, as a happy lover's sigh'—

"The two like one *sigh*, and that one *sigh*, like two wandering meteors,

—'Shall fly through the air'—

"That is, they shall mount above like falling stars, or else they shall skip like two jacks-with-lanterns, or will-with-a-wisp, and madge-with-a-candle.

"*And in their airy walk steal into their cruel father's breasts like subile guests*. So that their *father's breasts* must be in an *airy walk*, an *airy walk* of a *flier*. *And there they will read their souls, and track the spheres of their passions*. That is, these walking fliers, jack-with-a-lantern, etc., will put on his spectacles and fall a *reading souls*, and put on his pumps and fall a *tracking of spheres*; so that he will read and run, walk and fly, at the same time! Oh! Nimble Jack! *Then he will see how revenge here, how ambition there—the birds will hop about. And then view the dark characters of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars, in their orbs: Track the characters to their forms!* Oh! rare sport for Jack! Never was place so full of game as these breasts! You cannot stir, but flush a sphere, start a character, or unkennel an orb!"

Settle's is said to have been the first play embellished with sculptures; those ornaments seem to have given poor Dryden great disturbance. He tries, however, to ease his pain by venting his malice in a parody.

"The poet has not only been so imprudent to expose all this stuff, but so arrogant to defend it with an epistle—like a saucy booth-keeper that, when he had put a cheat upon the people, would wrangle and fight with any that would not like it, or would offer to discover it; for which arrogance our poet receives this correction; and, to jerk him a little the sharper, I will not transpose his verse, but by the help of his own words transnonsense sense, that, by my stuff, people may judge the better what his is:

'Great Boy, thy tragedy and sculptures done  
From press, and plates in fleets do homeward come:  
And in ridiculous and humble pride,  
Their course is ballad-singers' baskets guide,  
Whose greasy twigs do all new beauties take,  
From the gay shows thy dainty sculptures make,  
Thy lines a mess of rhyming nonsense yield,  
A senseless tale, with flattering fustian fill'd.  
No grain of sense does in our line appear,  
Thy words big bulks of boisterous bombast bear.  
With noise they move, and from player's mouths rebound,  
When their tongues dance to thy words' empty sound.  
By thee inspir'd the rumbling verses roll,

As if that rhyme and bombast lent a soul :  
 And with that soul they seem taught duty too,  
 To huffing words does humble nonsense bow,  
 As if it would they worthless worth enhance,  
 To th' lowest rank of fops thy praise advance ;  
 To whom, by instinct, all thy stuff is dear ;  
 Their loud claps echo to the theatre.  
 From breaths of fools thy commendation spreads,  
 Fame sings thy praise with mouths of loggerheads.  
 With noise and laughing each thy fustian greets,  
 'Tis clapt by quires of empty-headed cits,  
 Who have their tribute sent, and homage given,  
 As men in whispers send loud noise to heaven.'

"Thus I have daubed him with his own puddle: and now we are come from aboard his dancing, masking, rebounding, breathing fleet; and, as if we had landed at Gotham, we meet nothing but fools and nonsense."

Such was the criticism to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced between rage and terror—rage with little provocation, and terror with little danger. To see the highest minds thus levelled with the meanest may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.

The two parts of the *Conquest of Granada* (1672) are written with a seeming determination to glut the public with dramatic wonders, to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantic heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without inquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestic madness, such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often revered, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.

In the epilogue to the second part of the *Conquest of Granada*, Dryden indulges his favourite pleasure of discrediting his predecessors; and this epilogue he has defended by a long postscript. He had promised a second dialogue, in which he should more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the English poets who have written in the dramatic, epic, or lyric way. This promise was never formally performed; but, with respect to the dramatic writers, he has given us in his prefaces, and in this postscript, something equivalent; but his purpose being to exalt himself by the comparison, he shows faults distinctly, and only praises excellence in general terms.

A play thus written, in professed defiance of probability, naturally drew upon itself the vultures of the theatre. One of the critics that attacked it was Martin Clifford, to whom Sprat addressed the *Life of Cowley*, with such veneration of his critical powers as might naturally excite great expectations of instruction from his remarks. But let honest credulity beware of receiving characters from contemporary writers. Clifford's remarks, by the favour of Dr. Percy, were at last obtained; and, that no man may ever want them more, I will extract enough to satisfy all reasonable desire.

In the first letter his observation is only general: "You do live," says he, "in as much ignorance and darkness as you did in the womb: your writings are like a Jack-of-all-trades' shop; they have a variety, but nothing of value; and if thou art not the dullest plant-animal that ever the earth produced, all that I have conversed with are strangely mistaken in thee."

In the second he tells him that Almanzor is not more copied from Achilles than from Ancient Pistol. "But I am," says he, "strangely mistaken if I have not seen this very Almanzor of yours in some disguise about this town, and passing under another name. Pr'y thee tell me true, was not this Huffcap once the Indian Emperor? And at another time did he not call himself Maximin? Was not Lyndaraza once called Almeria? I mean under Montezuma the Indian Emperor. I protest and vow they are either the same, or so alike that I cannot, for my heart, distinguish one from the other. You are therefore a strange unconscionable thief, that are not content to steal from others, but dost rob thy poor wretched self too."

Now was Settle's time to take his revenge. He wrote a vindication of his own lines; and, if he is forced to yield anything, makes his reprisals upon his enemy. To say that his answer is equal to the censure, is no high commendation. To expose Dryden's method of analysing his expressions, he tries the same experiment upon the same description of the ships in the *Indian Emperor*, of which however he does not deny the excellence; but intends to show, that by studied misconstruction everything may be equally represented as ridiculous. After so much of Dryden's elegant animadversions, justice requires that something of Settle's should be exhibited. The following observations are therefore extracted from a quarto pamphlet of ninety-five pages:

'Fate after him below with pain did move,  
And Victory could scarce keep pace above.'

"These two lines, if he can show me any sense or thought in, or anything but bombast and noise, he shall make me believe every word in his observations on Morocco sense."

In the *Empress of Morocco* were these lines:

I'll travel then to some remoter sphere,  
Till I find out new worlds, and crown you there.

On which Dryden made this remark :

"I believe our learned author takes a sphere for a country ; the sphere of Morocco, as if Morocco were the globe of earth and water ; but a globe is no sphere neither, by his leave," etc. To which Settle rejoins : "So *sphere* must not be sense, unless it relate to a circular motion about a globe, in which sense the astronomers use it. I would desire him to expound these lines in *Granada*.

'I'll to the turrets of the palace go,  
And add new fire to those that fight below,  
Thence, Hero-like, with torches by my side,  
(Far be the omen tho') my Love I'll guide.  
No, like his better fortune I'll appear,  
With open arms, loose veil, and flowing hair,  
Just flying forward from my rowling sphere.'

"I wonder, if he be so strict, how he dares make so bold with *sphere* himself, and be so critical in other men's writings. Fortune is fancied standing on a globe, not on a *sphere*, as he told us in the first act.

"Because *Elkanah's similes are the most unlike things to what they are compared in the world*, I'll venture to start a simile in his *Annus Mirabilis* : he gives this poetical description of the ship called the London :

"The goodly London in her gallant trim,  
The Phoenix-daughter of the vanquisht old,  
Like a rich bride does to the ocean swim,  
And on her shadow rides in floating gold.  
Her flag aloft spread rustling in the wind,  
And sanguine streamers seem'd the flood to fire :  
The weaver, charm'd with what his loom design'd,  
Goes on to sea, and knows not to retire.  
With roomy decks her guns of mighty strength,  
Whose low-laid mouths each mounting billow laves,  
Deep in her draught, and warlike in her length,  
She seems a sea-wasp flying on the waves.'

"What a wonderful pudder is here, to make all these poetical beautifications of a ship ! That is, a *phoenix* in the first stanza, and but a *wasp* in the last : nay, to make his humble comparison of a *wasp* more ridiculous, he does not say it flew upon the waves as nimbly as a wasp, or the like, but it seemed a *wasp*. But our author at the writing of this was not in his altitudes, to compare ships to floating palaces ; a comparison to the purpose was a perfection he did not arrive to till his *Indian Emperor's* days. But perhaps his similitude has more in it than we imagine ; this ship had a great many guns in her, and they, put all together, made the sting in the wasp's tail : for this is all the reason I can guess why it seem'd a *wasp*. But, because we know him all

we can to help out, let it be a *phoenix seawasp*, and the rarity of such an animal may do much towards heightening the fancy.

"It had been much more more to his purpose, if he had designed to render the author's play little, to have searched for some such pedantry as this:

'Two ifs scarce make one possibility.  
If Justice will take all, and nothing give,  
Justice, methinks, is not distributive.  
To die or kill you is the alternative;  
Rather than take your life, I will not live.'

"Observe how prettily our author chops logic in heroic verse. Three such fustian, canting words as *distributive*, *alternative*, and *two ifs*, no man but himself would have come within the noise of. But he's a man of general learning, and all comes into his plays.

"'Twould have done well, too, if he could have met with a rant or two worth the observation: such as,

'Move swiftly, Sun, and fly a lover's pace,  
Leave months and weeks behind thee in thy race.'

"But surely the Sun, whether he flies a lover's or not a lover's pace, leaves weeks and months, nay, years too, behind him in his race.

"Poor Robin, or any other of the philomathematics, would have given him satisfaction in the point.

'If I would kill thee now, thy fate's so low,  
That I must stoop ere I can give the blow.  
But mine is fixt so far above thy crown,  
That all thy men,  
Piled on thy back, can never pull it down.'

"Now where that is, Almanzor's fate is fixed, I cannot guess; but, wherever it is, I believe Almanzor, and think that all Abdalla's subjects, piled upon one another, might not pull down his fate so well as without piling: besides, I think Abdalla so wise a man, that if Almanzor had told him piling his men upon his back might do the feat, he would scarce bear such a weight, for the pleasure of the exploit; but 'tis a huff, and let Abdalla do it if he dare.

'The people like a headlong torrent go,  
And every dam they break or overflow.  
But, unoppos'd, they either lose their force;  
Or wind in volumes to their former course.'

Very pretty allusion, contrary to all sense or reason. Torrents, I take it, let 'em ~~will~~ <sup>flow</sup> so much, can never return to their former course, unless he

can suppose that fountains can go upwards, which is impossible: nay, more, in the foregoing pages he tells us so too. A trick of a very unfaithful memory.

"But can no more than fountains upward flow"; which of a *torrent*, which signifies a rapid stream, is much more impossible. Besides, if he goes to quibble, and say that 'tis possible, by art, water may be made return, and the same water run twice in one and the same channel, then he quite confutes what he says; for 'tis by being opposed that it runs into its former course; for all engines that make water so return do it by compulsion and opposition. Or, if he means a headlong torrent for a tide, which would be ridiculous, yet tides do not wind in volumes, but come foreright back (if their current lies straight) to their former course, and that by opposition of the sea-water that drives them back again.

"And for fancy, when he lights of any thing like it, 'tis a wonder if it be not borrowed. As here, for example of, I find this fanciful thought in his *Annus Mirabilis*:

'Old father Thames raised up his reverend head,  
But fear'd the fate of Simois would return;  
Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed,  
And shrunk his waters back into his urn.'

"This is stolen from Cowley's *Davideis*, p. 9:

'Swift Jordan started, and straight backward fled,  
Hiding amongst thick reeds his aged head.

And when the Spaniards their assault begin,  
At once beat those without and those within

"This Almanzor speaks of himself; and sure for one man to conquer an army within the city and another without the city at once is something difficult; but this flight is pardonable to some we meet with in *Granada*. Osmin, speaking of Almanzor,

'Who, like a tempest that outrides the wind,  
Made a just battle, ere the bodies join'd.'

"Pray what does this honourable person mean by a *tempest that outrides the wind*? A tempest that outrides itself. To suppose a tempest without wind is as bad as supposing a man to walk without feet; for if he supposes the tempest to be something distinct from the wind, yet, as being the effect of wind only, to come before the cause is a little preposterous: so that if he takes it one way, or if he takes it the other, those two *ifs* will scarce<sup>l</sup> be one *possibility*." Enough of Settle.

*Marriage-a-la-Mode* (1673) is a comedy dedicated to the Earl of Rochester, whom he acknowledges not only as the defender of his poetry, but the promoter of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673. The Earl of Rochester, therefore, was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always represents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with some disrespect in the preface to *Juvenal*.

*The Assignment, or Love in a Nunnery*, a comedy (1673), was driven off the stage, *against the opinion*, as the author says, *of the best judges*. It is dedicated, in a very elegant address, to Sir Charles Sedley, in which he finds an opportunity for his usual complaint of hard treatment and unreasonable censure.

*Amboyna* (1673) is a tissue of mingled dialogue in verse and prose, and was perhaps written in less time than *The Royal Martyr*: though the author thought not fit, either ostentatiously or mournfully, to tell how little labour it cost him, or at how short a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance, written in the time of the Dutch war to inflame the nation against their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his epilogue, to make his poetry not less destructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the second Dutch war in 1673.

*The State of Innocence and Fall of Man* (1674) is termed by him an opera: it is rather a tragedy in heroic rhyme, but of which the personages are such as cannot decently be exhibited on the stage. Some such production was foreseen by Marvel, who writes thus Milton:

Or if a work so infinite be spann'd  
 Jealous I was, that some less skilful hand  
 (Such as disquiet always what is well,  
 And by ill imitating would excel)  
 Might hence presume the whole creation's day,  
 To change in scenes, and show it in a play.

It is another of his hasty productions; for the heat of his imagination raised in it a month.

This composition is addressed to the Princess of Modena, then Duchess of York, in a strain of flattery which disgraces genius, and which it was wonderful that any man that knew the meaning of his own words could use without self-detestation. It is an attempt to mingle earth and heaven, by praising human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroic verse and poetic licence; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the use of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reason which he gives for printing what was never acted cannot be overpassed—"I was induced to it in my own defence, many hundred copies of it being dispersed abroad without my knowledge or consent; so that every



one gathering new faults, it became at length a libel against me." These copies, as they gathered faults, were apparently manuscript; and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines were likely to be transcribed. An author has a right to print his own works, and need not seek an apology in falsehood; but he that could bear to write the dedication felt no plain in writing the preface.

*Aureng Zebe* (1676) is a tragedy founded on the actions of a great prince then reigning, but over nations not likely to employ their critics upon the transactions of the English stage. If he had known and disliked his own character, our trade was not in those times secure from his resentment. His country is at such a distance, that the manners might be safely falsified, and the incidents feigned; for the remoteness of place is remarked by Racine to afford the same conveniences to a poet as length of time.

This play is written rhyme, and has the appearance of being the most elaborate of all the dramas. The personages are imperial; but the dialogue is often domestic, and therefore susceptible of sentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life is celebrated, and there are many other passages that may be read with pleasure.

This play is addressed to the Earl of Mulgrave, afterwards Duke of Buckingham, himself, if not a poet, yet a writer of verses, and a critic. In this address Dryden gave the first hints of his intention to write an epic poem. He mentions his design in terms so obscure, that he seems afraid lest his plan should be purloined, as, he says, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to *Juvenal*. "The subject," says he, "you know is great, the story English, and neither too far distant from the present age, nor too near approaching it."

*All for Love, or the World well lost* (1678), a tragedy founded upon the story of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, "is the only play which he wrote for himself"; the rest were given to the people. It is by universal consent accounted the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantic omnipotence of love, he has recommended, as laudable and worthy of imitation, that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vicious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Of this play the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topics of malicious and ignorant criticism, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama, are deservedly celebrated for their elegance and sprightliness.

*The King Keeper, or Mr. Limberham* (1678), is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the stage. What gave offence was in the printing, as the author says, altered or omitted. Dryden confesses that its indecency was objected to; but Langbaine, who yet seldom favours him, imputes its expulsion to resentment, because it "so much exposed the keeping part of the town."

*Oedipus* (1679) is a tragedy formed by Dryden and Lee, in conjunction, from the works of Sophocles, Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the scenes, and composed the first and third acts.

*Troilus and Cressida* (1679) is a play altered from Shakespeare; but so altered that, even in Langbaine's opinion, "the last scene in the third act is a masterpiece." It is introduced by a discourse on "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," to which I suspect that Rymer's book had given occasion.

The *Spanish Friar* (1681) is a tragi-comedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written against the Papists, it would naturally at that time have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at first, and partly by the real power both of the serious and risible part, it continued long a favourite of the public.

It was Dryden's opinion, at least for some time, and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternative of comic and tragic scenes, and that it is necessary to mitigate by alleviations of merriment the pressure of ponderous events, and the fatigue of toilsome passions. "Whoever," says he, "cannot perform both parts, is but half a poet for the stage."

The *Duke of Guise*, a tragedy (1683) written in conjunction with Lee, as *Oedipus* had been before, seems to deserve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the Covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the court, who attacked him with great violence, and were answered by him; though at last he seems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were to join in writing a play; and "he happened," says Dryden, "to claim the performance of that promise just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little respite before the undertaking of a second task. Two-thirds of it belonged to him; and to me only the first scene of the play, the whole fourth act, and the first half, or somewhat more, of the fifth."

This was the play written professedly for the party of the Duke of York, whose succession was then opposed. A parallel is intended between the Leaguers of France and the Covenanters of England; and this intention produced the controversy.

*Albion and Albanus* (1685) is a musical drama or opera, written, like the *Duke of Guise*, against the Republicans. With what success it was performed, I have not found.

*Don Sebastian* (1690) is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatic performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without sallies of frantic dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which leave a strong impression, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several scenes which the writer intended for comic; but

which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages, of excellence universally acknowledged; the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

This play was first acted in 1690, after Dryden had for some years discontinued dramatic poetry.

*Amphitryon* is a comedy derived from Plautus and Moliere. The dedication is dated October 1690. This play seems to have succeeded at its first appearance, and was, I think, long considered as a very diverting entertainment.

*King Arthur* (1691) is another opera. It was the last work that Dryden performed for King Charles, who did not live to see it exhibited. In the dedication to the Marquis of Halifax, there is a very elegant character of Charles, and a pleasing account of his latter life. When this was first brought upon the stage, news that the Duke of Monmouth had landed was told in the theatre; upon which the company departed, and *Arthur* was exhibited no more.

*Cleomenes* (April 1692) is a tragedy, only remarkable as it occasioned an incident related in *The Guardian* No. 45, and allusively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the representation, he was accosted thus by some airy stripling: "Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have spent my time like your Spartan." "That, Sir," said Dryden, "perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you that you are no hero."

His last drama was *Love Triumphant*, a tragi-comedy. In his dedication to the Earl of Salisbury he mentions, "the lowness of fortune to which he has so voluntarily reduced himself and of which he has no reason to be ashamed."

This play appeared in 1694. It is said to have been unsuccessful. The catastrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confessed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramatic labours with ill-success.

From such a number of theatrical pieces it will be supposed, by most readers, that he must have improved his fortune; at least, that such diligence with such abilities must have set penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great; and the poet had for a long time but a single night. The first that had two nights was *Southerne*; and the first that had three was *Rowe*. There were, however, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; and a play therefore seldom produced him more

than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.

Almost every piece had a dedication, written with such elegance and luxuriance of praise, as neither haughtiness nor avarice could be imagined able to resist. But he seems to have flattery too cheap. That praise is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increase the value of his copies, he often accompanied his work with a preface of criticism; a kind of learning then almost new in the English language, and which he who had considered with great accuracy the principles of writing was able to distribute copiously, as occasions arose. By these dissertations the public judgement must have been much improved; and Swift, who conversed with Dryden, relates that he regretted the success of his own instructions, and found his readers made suddenly too skilful to be easily satisfied.

His prologues had such reputation, that for some time a play was considered as less likely to be well received, if some of his verses did not introduce it. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till, being asked to write one for Mr. Southerne, he demanded three: "Not," said he, "young man, out of disrespect to you, but the players have had my goods too cheap."

Though he declares, that in his own opinion his genius was not dramatic, he had great confidence in his own fertility; for he is said to have engaged, by contract, to furnish four plays a year.

It is certain that in one year, 1678, he published *All for Love*, *Assignment*, two parts of the *Conquest of Granada*, *Sir Martin Marr-all* and the *State of Innocence*, six complete plays; with a celerity of performance, which, though all Langbaine's charges of plagiarism should be allowed, shows such facility of composition, such readiness of language, and such copiousness of sentiment, as since the name of Lopez de Vega perhaps no other author has ever possessed.

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however small, without molestation. He had critics to endure, and rivals to oppose. The two most distinguished wits of the nobility, the Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Rochester, declared themselves his enemies.

Buckingham characterized him in 1671, by the name of Bayes, in the *Rehearsal*; a farce which he is said to have written with the assistance of Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, Martin Clifford of the Charter House, and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chaplain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time and the number of hands employed upon this performance; in which, though by some artifice of action it yet keeps possession of the stage, it is not possible now to find anything that might not have been written without so long delay, or a confederacy so numerous.

To adjust the minute events of literary history is tedious and troublesome: it requires, indeed, no great force of understanding, but often depends upon inquiries which there is no opportunity of making or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The *Rehearsal* was played in December 1671, and yet is represented at ridiculing passages in the *Conquest of Granada* and *Assignment*, which were not published till 1678, in *Marriage-a-la-Mode*, published in 1673, and in *Tyrannic Love*, in 1677. These contradictions show how rashly satire is applied.

It is said that this farce was originally intended against Davenant, who in the first draught was characterized by the name of Biboa. Davenant had been a soldier and an adventurer.

There is one passage in the *Rehearsal* still remaining which seems to have related originally to Davenant. Bayes hurts his nose, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruise: how this affected Dryden does not appear. Davenant's nose had suffered such diminution by mishaps among the women that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is said likewise that Sir Robert Howard was once meant. The design was probably to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.

Much of the personal satire, to which it might owe its first reception, is now lost or obscured. Bayes probably imitated the dress and mimicked the manner of Dryden: the cant words which are so often in his mouth may be supposed to have been Dryden's habitual phrases or customary exclamations. Bayes, when he is to write, is blooded and purged: this, as Lamotte relates himself to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There were other strokes in the *Rehearsal* by which malice was gratified; the debate between Love and Honour, which keeps Prince Volscius in a single boot, is said to have alluded to the misconduct of the Duke of Ormond, who lost Dublin to the rebels while he was toying with a mistress.

The Earl of Rochester, to suppress the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to persuade the public that its approbation had been to that time misplaced. Settle was a while in high reputation: his *Empress of Morocco*, having 1673 first delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical meteor at the highest; the next moment began its fall. Rochester withdrew his patronage; seeming resolved, says one of his biographers, "to have a judgement contrary to that of the town;" perhaps being unable to endure any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himself contributed to raise it.

Neither critics nor rivals did Dryden much mischief, unless they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent bursts of resentment give reason to suspect. He is always angry at some past or afraid of some future censure; but he lessens the smart of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to repel the shafts of criticism by opposing a shield of adamant confidence.

The perpetual accusation produced against him was that of plagiarism, against which he never attempted any vigorous defence; for though he was perhaps sometimes injuriously censured, he would, by denying part of the charge, have confessed the rest; and, as his adversaries had the proof in their

own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power against facts, wisely left, in that perplexity which it generally produces, a question which it was his interest to suppress, and which, unless provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of writer, from about thirty-five to sixty-three, may be supposed to have been sufficiently busied by the composition of eight-and-twenty pieces for the stage, Dryden found room in the same space for many other undertakings.

But, how much soever he wrote, he was at least once suspected of writing more; for, in 1679, a paper of verses, called *An Essay on Satire*, was shown about in manuscript, by which the Earl of Rochester, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and others, were so much provoked that, as was supposed (for the actors were never discovered), they procured Dryden, whom they suspected as the author, to be 18th December, 1679 waylaid and beaten. This incident is mentioned by the Duke of Buckinghamshire, the true writer, in his *Essay on Poetry*, where he says of Dryden:

Though prais'd and punish'd for another's rhymes,  
His own deserve as great applause sometimes.

His reputation in time was such that his name was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance, and therefore he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the *Life of Polybius* to the translation of Sir Henry Shere, and those of Lucian and Plutarch to versions of their works by different hands. Of the English *Tacitus* he translated the first book; and, if Gordon be credited, translated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be mentioned without some degree of indignation; but it is not, I suppose, so much to be inferred that Dryden wanted the literature necessary to the perusal of Tacitus, as that, considering himself as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the public, and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the nearest way.

In 1680, the *Epistles of Ovid* being translated by the poets of the time, among which one was the work of Dryden, and another of Dryden and Lord Mulgrave, it was necessary to introduce them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in braking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson, Sandys, and Holyday had fixed the judgement of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better one could be found than they had taken, though Fanshaw, Denham, Waller, and Cowley had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In [November] 1681 Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politics with poetry in the memorable satire called *Absalom and Achitophel*,

written against the faction which, by Lord Sallsbury's incitement, set the Duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was applied to the support of public principles, and in which therefore every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookseller, told me he had not known it equalled but by Sacheverell's trial.

The reason of this general perusal Addison has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decipher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to inquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed in their turns to the shafts of satire, which, though neither so well pointed nor perhaps so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One of these poems is called *Dryden's Satire to his Muse*, ascribed, though, as Pope says, falsely, to Somers, who was afterwards chancellor. The poem, whosesover it was, has much virulence, and some sprightliness. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* had two answers, now both forgotten—one called *Azaria and Hushai*, the other *Absalom Senior* [or *Achitophel transposed*] a poem. Of these hostile compositions, Dryden apparently imputes *Absalom Senior* to Settle, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. *Azaria and Hushai* was, as Wood says, imputed to him, though it is somewhat unlikely that he should write twice on the same occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical transactions.

The same year [in March 1681-2] he published *The Medal*, of which the subject is a medal struck on Lord Shaftesbury's escape from a prosecution by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the same principles, and saw them both attacked by the same antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered *Absalom*, appeared with equal courage in opposition to *The Medal*, and published an answer called *The Medal Reversed*, with so much success in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them, who died forgotten in an hospital, and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same, to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding, might with truth have had inscribed upon his stone:

Here lies the Rival and Antagonist of Dryden.

Settle was, for his rebellion, severely chastized by Dryden under the name of Doeg, in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, and was perhaps for his factious audacity made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the Mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much to have deserved even this degree of regard if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyric on the virtues of Judge Jefferies; and what more could have been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments, or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles, or settle the dates, would be tedious, with little use. It may be observed, that, as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by some personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topic.

Soon after the accession of King James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the Church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himself a convert to popery. This at any other time might have passed with little censure. Sir Kenelm Digby embraced popery; the two Reynolds reciprocally converted one another; and Chillingworth himself was a while so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties or such motives, as may either unite them to the Church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who perhaps never inquired why he was a Protestant, should by an artful and experienced disputant be made a Papist, overborne by the sudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a representation which shows only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was the then state of popery; every artifice was used to show it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is likewise an elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest. I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right, than virtue to maintain it. But inquiries into the heart are not for man; we must now leave him to his Judge.



The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him (1686) to defend the controversial papers found in the strong-box of Charles the Second, and what yet was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.

With hopes of promoting popery, he was employed to translate Maimbourg's *History of League*, which he published [1684] with a large introduction. His name is likewise prefixed [1688] to the English *Life of Francis Xavier*; but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud, which, however, seems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The version of *Xavier's Life* is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occasion of it is said to have been, that the Queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate Varillas's *History of Heresies*; and, when Burnet published remarks upon it, to have written an *Answer*; upon which Burnet makes the following observation:

"I have been informed from England, that a gentleman who is known both for poetry and other things had spent three months in translating M. Varillas's *History*; but that as soon as my *Reflections* appeared he discontinued his labour, finding the credit of his author was gone. Now, if he thinks it is recovered by his *Answer*, he [Dryden] will perhaps go on with his translation; and this may be, for aught I know, as good an entertainment for him as the conversation that he had set on between the Hinds and Panthers, and all the rest of animals, for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough for an author; and this history and that poem are such extraordinary things of their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become likewise the translator of the worst history that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve both proportionably, he will hardly find that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion, to choose one of the worst. It is true, he had something to sink from in matter of wit; but as for his morals, it is scarce possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three months' labour; but in it he has done me all the honour that any man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be, that he would go on and finish his translation. By that it will appear whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge in this matter, has, upon the seeing of our debate, pronounced in M. Varillas's favour or in mine. It is true, Mr. D. will suffer a little by it; but at least it will serve to keep him in from other extravagances; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it as he has done by his last employment.

Having probably felt his own inferiority in theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse

was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtilty and harmony united are still feeble, when opposed to truth.

Actuated, therefore, by zeal for Rome, or hope of fame, he published [April, 1687] the *Hind and the Panther*, a poem, in which the Church of Rome, figured by the *milk-white Hind*, defends her tenets against the Church of England, represented by the *Panther*, a beast beautiful, but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking theology appears at once full of absurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the *Country Mouse and the City Mouse*, a parody, written by Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.

The conversion of such a man at such a time was not likely to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious Thomas Brown, of which the two first were called *Reasons of Mr. Bayes's changing his Religion*; and the third, *The Reasons of Mr. Haynes the Player's Conversion and Re-conversion*. The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the public attention.

In the two first dialogues Bayes is brought into the company of Crites and Eugenius, with whom he had formerly debated on dramatic poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. Bayes and Mr. Haynes.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow*, and therefore laid out his powers upon small justs or gross bufoonery, so that his performances have little intrinsic value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain is disgraced by the grab in which it is exhibited. One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden *little Bayes*. Ajax, who happens to be mentioned, is "he that were as many cowhides upon his shield as would have furnished half the King's army with shoe-leather."

Being asked whether he had seen the *Hind and the Panther*, Crites answers: "Seen it! Mr. Bayes, why, I can stir nowhere but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a band-box, when my laundress brings home my linen; sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunk-maker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancerylane parcel. For your comfort, Mr. Bayes, I have not only seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise *The Worth of a Penny* to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in cock-ale, stewed apples, and penny custards."

The whole animation of these compositions arises from a profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. "To secure one's chastity," says Bayes, "little more is necessary than to leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which, to a wise man, is no greater a punishment than it would be a

fanatic parson to be forbid seeing *The Cheats* and *The Committee*, or for my Lord Mayor and alderman to be interdicted the sight of *The London Cuck-olds*." This is the general strain, and therefore I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions: "You began," says Crites to Bayes, "a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your Muse, which appeared first in a tyrant's quarrel, should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpation of the Hind."

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the Prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination, and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity—predictions of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of popish hope was blasted for ever by the Revolution. A Papist now could be no longer laureate. The revenue, which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of *Og*. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed, but seemed very angry that Shadwell succeeded him, and has therefore celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem exquisitely satirical, called *Mac Flecknoe*—of which the *Dunciad*, as Pope himself declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior, that Lord Dorset, when as chamberlain he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purse an allowance equal to the salary. This is no romantic or incredible act of generosity; a hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a public infliction; and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but, if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

During the short reign of King James, he had written nothing for the stage, being, in his opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might perhaps have been less lavish without inconvenience, for James was never said to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the public, or perhaps expecting a second Revolution, he produced *Don Sebastian* in 1690; and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new version of Juvenal and Persius. Of Juvenal he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires; and of Persius

the whole work. On this occasion he introduced his two sons to the public, as nurselings of the Muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface in the form of a dedication to Lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epic poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epic as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imagined a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The surprises and terrors of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and oppositions of Pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes, and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken, with this incurable defect, that in a contest between heaven and hell we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terror.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had address enough to surmount. In a war, justice can be but on one side; and, to entitle the hero to the protection of angels, he must fight in defence in indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers, and enlarged our language; and might perhaps have contributed by pleasing instructions to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a public stipend, was not likely in these times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us, nor had the nation yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore with stealing; only, says he, "The guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage."

In 1694 he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Fresnoy's *Art of Painting* into English prose. The preface, which he boasts to have written in twelve mornings, exhibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind stored like his no labour to produce them.

In July [1697] he published his version of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the Lord Clifford, the Georgics to the Earl of Chesterfield, and the *Æneid* to the Earl of Mulgrave. This economy of flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

This translation was censured [1698] by Milbourn, a clergyman, styled, by Pope, "The Fairest of Critics," because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His last work was his *Fables* [fol. 1700], published in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonson; by which he obliged himself, in consideration of 300*l.*, to finish for the press 10,000 verses.

In this volume is comprised the well-known *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he spent a fortnight "in composing and correcting." But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose *Equivoque*, a poem of only 346 lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it?

Part of this book of *Fables* is the first Iliad in English, intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the 1st of May, 1700, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died in Gerard-street, of a mortification in his leg.

There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit, are thus related, as I find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary:

"On the Wednesday morning following, being May-day, 1700, under the most excruciating dolours, he [Mr. Dryden] died. Dr. Sprat, then bishop of Rochester, sent the next day to Lady Elizabeth, that he would make a present of the ground, which was 40*l.*, with all the other Abbey fees, etc., to his deceased friend. Lord Halifax sent also to my Lady and Mr. Charles, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman's private funeral, and afterwards bestow 500 *l.* on a monument in the Abbey; which, as they had no reason to refuse, they accepted. On the Saturday following the company came; the corpse was put into a velvet hearse, and eighteen mourning-coaches filled with company attended; when, just before they began to move, Lord Jefferies, with some of his rakish companions, coming by, in wine, asked whose funeral? And being told, 'What,' cries he, 'shall Dryden, the greatest honour and ornament of the nation, be buried after this private manner? No, gentlemen, let all that loved Mr. Dryden, and honour his memory, alight and join with me in gaining my Lady's consent to let me have the honour of his internment, which shall be after another manner than this; and I will bestow 1000 *l.* on a monument in the Abbey for him.' The gentlemen in the coaches, not knowing of the Bishop of Rochester's favour, nor of the Lord Halifax's generous design (these two noble spirits having, out of respect to the family, enjoined Lady Elizabeth and her son to keep their favour concealed to the world, and let it pass for her own expense, etc.), readily came out of the coaches, and attended Lord Jefferies up to the Lady's bedside, who was then sick: he repeated the purport of what he had before said; but she absolutely refusing, he fell on his knees, vowing

never to rise till his request was granted. The rest of the company, by his desire, kneeled also; she, being naturally of a timorous disposition, and then under a sudden surprise, fainted away. As soon as she recovered her speech she cried, *No, no!* 'Enough, gentlemen,' replied he (rising briskly), 'my Lady is very good, she says, *Go, go!*' She repeated her former words with all her strength; but, alas, in vain! Her feeble voice was lost in their acclamations of joy; and Lord Jefferies ordered the hearsemen to carry the corpse to Russell's, an undertaker in Cheapside, and leave it there till he sent orders for the embalment, which, he added, should be after the royal manner. His directions were obeyed, the company dispersed, and Lady Elizabeth and Mr. Charles remained inconsolable. Next morning Mr. Charles waited on Lord Halifax, etc., to excuse his mother and himself, by relating the real truth. But neither his Lordship nor the Bishop would admit of any plea; especially the latter, who had the Abbey lighted, the ground opened, the choir attending, an anthem ready set, and himself waiting for some hours without any corpse to bury. Russell, after three days' expectance of orders for embalment without receiving any, waits on Lord Jefferies; who, pretending ignorance of the matter, turned it off with an ill-natured jest, saying, those who observed the orders of a drunken frolic deserved no better; that he remembered nothing at all of it; and that he might do what he pleased with the corpse. On this, Mr. Russell waits on the Lady Elizabeth and Mr. Dryden; but alas! it was not in their power to answer. The season was very hot, the deceased had lived high and fast, and, being corpulent and abounding with gross humours, grew very offensive. The undertaker, in short, threatened to bring the corpse home and set it before their door. It cannot be easily imagined what grief, shame and confusion seized this unhappy family. They begged a day's respite, which was granted. Mr. Charles wrote a very handsome letter to Lord Jefferies, who returned it with this cool answer—'He knew nothing of the matter, and would be troubled no more about it.' He then addressed the Lord Halifax and Bishop of Rochester, who were both too justly, though unhappily, incensed to do anything in it. In this distress, Dr. Garth, a man who entirely loved Mr. Dryden, and was withal a man of generosity and great humanity, sent for the corpse to the College of Physicians in Warwick Lane, and proposed a funeral by subscription, to which himself set a most noble example: Mr. Wycherley, and several others, among whom must not be forgotten Henry Cromwell, Esq., Captain Gibbons, and Mr. Christopher Metcalfe (Mr. Dryden's apothecary and intimate friend, since a collegiate physician), who with many others contributed most largely to the subscription; and at last a day, about three weeks after his decease, was appointed for the interment at the Abbey. Dr. Garth pronounced a fine Latin oration over the corpse at the college; but the audience being numerous and the room large, it was requisite the orator should be elevated that he might be heard; but, as it unluckily happened, there was nothing at hand but an old bear-barrel, which the Doctor with much good-nature mounted; and, in the midst of his oration, beating time to the accent with his foot, the head broke in and his feet sunk

to the bottom, which occasioned the malicious report of his enemies that he was turned Tub-Preacher: however, he finished the oration with a superior grace, to the loud acclamations of mirth which inspired the mixed, or rather *mob*, auditors. The procession began to move—a numerous train of coaches attended the hearse—but, good God! in what disorder can only be expressed by a sixpenny pamphlet soon after published, entitled *Dryden's Funeral*. At last the corpse arrived at the Abbey, which was all unlighted. No organ played, no anthem sung; only two of the singing boys preceded the corpse, who sung an ode of Horace, with each a small candle in their hand. The butchers and other mob broke in like a deluge, so that only about eight or ten gentlemen could get admission, and those forced to cut the way with their drawn swords. The coffin, in this disorder, was let down into Chaucer's grave, with as much confusion and as little ceremony as was possible, every one glad to save themselves from the gentlemen's swords or the clubs of the mob. When the funeral was over, Mr. Charles sent a challenge to Lord Jefferies, who refusing to answer it, he sent several others, and went often himself, but could neither get a letter delivered, nor admittance to speak to him, which so justly incensed him that he resolved, since his lordship refused to answer him like a gentleman, that he would watch an opportunity to meet him, and fight off hand, though with all the rules of honour; which his lordship hearing, left the town; and Mr. Charles could never have the satisfaction to meet him, though he sought it till his death with the utmost application."

This story I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; nor have I met with any confirmation, but in a letter of Farquhar; and he only relates that the funeral of Dryden was tumultuary and confused.

Supposing the story true, we may remark that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this time a young drunken lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be justled out of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into a house, he would be sent roughly away; and, what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe that those who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for such an accident, have withdrawn their contributions.

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the Duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve to his dramatic works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the Duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.

He married the Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to Lord Somers, not very honourable to either party. By her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Erasmus-Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to Pope Clement XI; and visiting England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim across the Thames at Windsor.

John was author of a comedy called *The Husband his own Cuckold*. He is said to have died at Rome. Henry entered into some religious order. It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion, that he taught it to his sons. A man conscious of hypocritical profession in himself, is not likely to convert others; and as his sons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.

Of the person of Dryden I know not any account; of his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, ready to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere reconciliation with those that had offended him. His friendship, where he professed it, went beyond his professions. He was of a very easy, of very pleasing access; but somewhat slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others; he had that in his nature which abhorred intrusion into any society whatever. He was therefore less known, and consequently his character became more liable to misapprehensions and misrepresentations: he was very modest, and very easily to be discountenanced in his approaches to his equals of superiors. As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of everything that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it; but then his communication was by no means pedantic, or imposed upon the conversation, but just such, and went so far, as, by the natural turn of the conversation in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in his correction of the errors of any writer who thought fit to consult him, and full as ready and patient to admit the reprehensions of others, in respect of his own oversights or mistakes."

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shown in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His placability and his friendship indeed were solid virtues; but courtesy and good-humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be collected as it can from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value; he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his own character, and to have set a very high value of his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his conversation, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not submissive but indignant, with such reference of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.



His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness; he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expressed with very little scruple his high opinion of his own powers; but his self-condemnations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and is particularly charged with inciting Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural; the purpose was such as no man would confess, and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe?

He has been described as magisterially presiding over the younger writers, and assuming the distribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whose judgement is incontestable may without usurpation examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose sprightly sayings diverted company; and one of his censors makes him say:

Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay:  
To writing bred, I know not what to say.

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restraints their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language: his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. "His thoughts," when he wrote, "flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to choose, and which to reject." Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk; yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself. But whatever was his character as a companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the Duke of Ormond, that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden consorted: who they were, Carte has not told, but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was indeed reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great; and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiors is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions of laudable qualities. Caresses and preferences are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation; but, if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness and abject adulation; but they were probably, like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity. Such degradation of the dignity of genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent and to testify his repentance.

Of dramatic immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but in the meanness and servility of hyperbolic adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn. When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself, nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expenses, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endless variation; and when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him whom he wished to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another stamp. Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastic homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention, than mortified by the prostitution of his judgement. It is indeed not certain that on these occasions his judgement much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others and of himself is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a sullen growl of resentment, or querulous murmur of distress. His works are undervalued, his merit is unrewarded, and "he has few thanks to pay his stars that he was born among Englishmen." To his critics he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by

showing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting importance to names which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not often depart ; his complaints are for the greater part general ; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name. He condescended indeed to a controversy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling ; and since Settle is sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to critics, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included ; they are like other poems, effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface of his *Fables*. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply ; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness, and the "horse-play of his raillery" ; and asserts that "in many places he has perverted by his glosses the meaning" of what he censures ; but in other things he confesses that he is justly taxed ; and says, with great calmness and candour, "I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph ; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance." Yet as our best dispositions are imperfect, he left standing in the same book a reflection on Collier of great asperity, and indeed of more asperity than wit.

Blackmore he represents as made his enemy by the poem of *Absalom and Achitophel*, which "he thinks a little hard upon his fanatic patrons" ; and charges him with borrowing the plan of his *Arthur* from the preface to Juvenal, "though he had," says he, "the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it to traduce me in a libel."

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him was a *Satire against Wit* [1700] ; in which, having lamented the exuberance of false wit and the deficiency of true, he proposes that all wit should be re-coined it is current, and appoints masters of assay who shall reject all that is light or debased.

'Tis true, that when the coarse and worthless dross  
Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loss ;  
Ev'n Congreve, Southerne, *Manly* Wycherley,  
When thus refin'd, will grievous sufferers be ;  
Into the melting pot when Dryden comes,  
What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes !  
How will he shrink when all his lewd allay,  
And wicked mixture, shall be purg'd away !

Thus stands the passage in the last edition ; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus :

But what remains will be so pure, 'twill bear  
Th' examination of the most severe.

Blackmore, finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not: a short extract will be sufficient. "He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood; if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall never be able to force himself upon me for an adversary: I condemn him too much to enter into competition with him.

"As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy."

Dryden, indeed, discovered in many of his writings an affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unseasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the sacrificer in the *Georgics* "The Holy Butcher": the translation is not, indeed, ridiculous; but Trapp's anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest; as if any reproach of the follies of Paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden's dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine, and I think by Brown, to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination; but he denies, in the preface to his *Fables*, that he ever designed to enter into the Church; and such a denial he would not have hazarded if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times by venturing to be wicked as far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The persecution of critics was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind,

that it is impossible not to detest the age which could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigencies. Such outcries were surely never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expenses no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the laureate, to which King James added the office of historiographer, perhaps with some additional emoluments, his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal; and they that trust her promises make little scruple of revelling today on the profits of the morrow.

Of his plays the profits was not great; and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson, I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers:

I do hereby promise to pay John Dryden, Esq., or order, on the 25th of March, 1699, the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, in consideration of ten thousand verses, which the said John Dryden, Esq., is to deliver to me, Jacob Tonson, when finished, whereof seven thousand five hundred verse, more or less, are already in the said Jacob Tonson's possession. And I do hereby farther promise, and engage myself, to make up the said sum of two hundred and fifty guineas three hundred pounds sterling to the said John Dryden, Esq., his executors, administrators, or assigns, at the beginning of the second impression of the said ten thousand verses.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand seal, this 20th day of March, 1698-9.

JACOB TONSON.

Sealed and delivered, being first stampd,  
pursuant to the acts of parliament for  
that purpose, in the presence of

BENJ. PORTLOCK  
WILL. CONGREVE

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March 24th, 1698.

Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonson the sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings, in pursuance of an agreement for ten thousand verses to be delivered to him about seven thousand five hundred, more or less; he the said Jacob Tonson being obliged to make up the foresaid sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings three hundred pounds, at the beginning of the second impression of the foresaid ten thousand verses;

I say, received by me.  
JOHN DRYDEN.

Witness, CHARLES DRYDEN.

Two hundred and fifty guineas at 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* is 268*l.* 15*s.*

It is manifest, from the dates of this contract, that it relates to the volume of *Fables*, which contains about twelve thousand verses, and for which therefore the payment must have been afterwards enlarged.

I have been told of another letter yet remaining, in which he desires Tonson to bring him money to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse in his exigences but to his bookseller.

The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King of Oxford, that one day, when he visited Dryden, they heard, as they were conversing, another person entering the house. "This," said Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care not to depart before he goes away: for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and, if you leave me unprotected, I must suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, besides the payment of the bookseller, cannot be known: Mr. Derrick, who consulted some of his relations, was informed that his *Fables* obtained 500*l.* from the Duchess of Ormond—a present not unsuitable to the magnificence of that splendid family; and he quotes Moyles, as relating that 40*l.* were paid by a musical society for the use of *Alexander's Feast*.

In those days the economy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain; of this disorder there is reason to believe that the laureate sometimes felt the effects; for in one of his prefaces he complains of those who, being intrusted with the distribution of the prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of his petty habits of slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found to whom he was personally known, one told me, that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

One of his opinions will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. He put great confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the appendix to the *Life of Congreve* is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of

information, or character of veracity. That he had the configurations of the horoscope in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men,

The utmost malice of the stars is past—  
 Now frequent *trines* the happier lights among,  
 And *high-raisd Jove*, from his dark prison freed,  
 Those weights took off that on his planet hung,  
 Will gloriously the new-laid works succeed.

He has elsewhere shown his attention to the planetary powers; and in the preface to this *Fables* has endeavoured obliquely to justify his superstition by attributing the same to some of the ancients. The letter, added to this narrative, leaves no doubt of his notions or practice.

So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestic manners of a man whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critic and a poet.

Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two *Arts of English Poetry* were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley; but Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry* was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not perhaps find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of dramatic poems was then not generally understood. Audiences applauded by instinct; and poets perhaps often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it

wanted before; or, rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.

The *Dialogue on the Drama* was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to submit, when his name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by custom, and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakespeare may stand as a perpetual model of economiastic criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus, on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon, by Demosthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so extensive in its comprehension, and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the editors and admirers of Shakespeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.

In this, and in all his other essays on the same subject, the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the censor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgement by his power of performance.

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed, was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. It was said of a dispute between two mathematicians, "*malim cum Scaligero errare, quam Clavio recte sapere*"; that "it was more eligible to go wrong with one than right with the other." A tendency of the same kind every mind must feel at the perusal of Dryden's prefaces and Rymer's discourses. With Dryden we are wandering in quest of Truth; whom we find, if we find her at all, dressed in the graces of elegance; and, if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself; we are led only through fragrance and flowers. Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles; and Truth, if we meet her, appears repulsive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had studied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations; he poured out his knowledge with little labour; for of labour, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he was not a lover. To write



*con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things, and the structure of the human mind, he may doubtless be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp, speaking of the praises which he bestows on *Palamon and Arcite*, says:

Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam Chauceri, pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada aequet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo iudice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc prae manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur.

He is therefore by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramatic rhyme is generally known. Spence, in his remarks on Pope's *Odyssey*, produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the *Æneid*, in favour of translating an epic poem into blank verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the Iliad, some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any licence to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself in his own sophistries. But when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; when he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribed morality to a comic poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by Sewel. His comparison of the first line of Virgil with the first of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad, if he had heard him thundering out:

Quae superimposito moles geminata colosso.

Statius perhaps heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggeration somewhat hyperbolic; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one sounding line. Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was impressed into the service.

What he wished to say, he says at Hazard; he cited *Gorboduc*, which he had never seen; gives a false account of Chapman's versification; and discovers in the preface to his *Fables* that he translated the first book of the Iliad, without knowing what was in the second.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden never made any great advances in literature. As having distinguished himself at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge; it is not to be supposed that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students, but his scholastic acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his *Dialogue on the Drama* he pronounces with great confidence that the Latin tragedy of *Medea* is not Ovid's, because it is not sufficiently interesting and pathetic. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play—for one line is left us—is not there to be found. There was therefore no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shows what he wanted; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much, it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence; yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out by the impetuosity of his genius to more vivid and speedy instructors; and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

It must be confessed that he scarcely ever one appears to want book-learning but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred the praise which he gives his master Charles:

His conversation, wit, and parts,  
 His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,  
     Were such, dead authors could not give,  
     But habitudes of those that live ;  
 Who lighting him, did greater lights receive ;  
     He drain'd from all, and all they knew,  
 His apprehensions quick, his judgement true :  
     That the most learn'd with shame confess  
 His knowledge more, his reading only less.

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it ; the atoms of probability, of which my opinion has been formed, lie scattered over all his works ; and by him who thinks the question worth his notice, his works must be perused with very close attention.

Criticism, either didactic or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons ; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled : every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid ; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous ; what is little is gay ; what is great is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently ; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Everything is excused by the play of images and the sprightliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble ; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh ; and though since his earlier works more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.

He who writes much will not easily escape a manner—such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always *another and the same* ; he does not exhibit a second time the same elegances in the same form, nor appear to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously ; for, being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.

From his prose, however, Dryden derives only his accidental and secondary praise ; the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts, and rugged metre, some advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham ; they had shown that long discourses in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets, and that verse consisted not only in the number but the arrangement of syllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do? Their works were not many, nor were their of very ample comprehension. More examples of more modes of composition were necessary for the establishment of regularity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation necessarily divides itself into diction scholastic and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and gross; and from a nice distinction of these different parts arises a great part of the beauty of style. But, if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion; and every man took for very purpose what chance might offer him.

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose had been rarely attempted: we had few elegances or flowers of speech; the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have over-borne the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of Ancient Writers; a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace almost word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the best versifier of the last age, has struggled hard to comprise every book of the English *Metamorphoses* in the same number of verses with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to show that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them. Cowley saw that such copyers were a servile race; he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.

When languages are forced upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course. Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. "Translation, therefore," says Dryden, "is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase."

All polished languages have different styles; the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from the translator. He is to exhibit his authors' thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been English: rugged magnificence is not to be softened; hyperbolical ostentation is not to be repressed; nor sententious affectation to have its point blunted. A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excel him.

The reasonableness of these rules seems sufficient for their vindication; and the effect produced by observing them were so happy, that I know not whether they were ever opposed but by Sir Edward Sherburn, a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry; and who, being better qualified to give the meaning than the spirit of Seneca, has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigencies in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have supplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased; and I know not how it will be proved, that if he had written less he would have written better; or that indeed he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But, as is said by his Sebastian:

What had been, is unknown; what is, appears.

We know that Dryden's several productions were so many successive expedients for his support; his plays were therefore often borrowed; and his poems were almost all occasional

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He

whose work is general and arbitrary has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication till he has satisfied his friends and himself, till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination, and polished away those faults which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the public has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always considered as business for the Muse. But after so many inaugural gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who says anything not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphal chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegances and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the composition must be despatched while conversation is yet busy, and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional compositions may however secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwell was the first public event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroic stanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and, though not always proper, show a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth; and the diction, if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant was perhaps at this time his favourite author, though *Gondibert* never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification: there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verses on the Restoration, he says of the King's exile:

He, toss'd by Fate,  
Could taste no sweets of youth's desired age,  
But found his life too true a pilgrimage.

And afterwards, to show how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark :

Well might the ancient poets then confer  
On Night the honour'd name of *counsellor*,  
Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,  
We light alone in dark afflictions find.

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elsewhere be easily found :

'Twas Monk, whom Providence design'd to loose  
Those real bonds false freedom did impose.  
The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene  
Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean,  
To see small clues draw vastest weights along,  
Not in their bulk, but in their order strong.  
Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore  
Smiles to that changed face that wept before.  
With ease such fond chimeras we pursue,  
As fancy frames for fancy to subdue :  
But, when ourselves to action we betake,  
It shuns the mint like gold that chymists make  
How hard was then his task, at once to be  
What in the body natural we see !  
Man's Architect distinctly did ordain  
The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,  
Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense  
The springs of motion from the seat of sense  
'Twas not the hasty product of a day,  
But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.  
He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,  
Would let them play a-while upon the hook  
Our healthful food the stomach labours thus,  
At first embracing what it strait doth crush.  
Wise leeches will not vain receipts obtrude,  
While growing pains pronounce the humours crude ;  
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill  
Till some safe crisis authorise their skill.

He had not yet learned, indeed he never learned well, to forbear the improper use of mythology. After having rewarded the heathen deities for their care—

With Alga who the sacred altar strows ?  
To all the sea-gods Charles an offering owes ;

A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain ;  
A lamb to you, ye Tempests of the Main—

he tells us, in the language of religion :

Prayer storm'd the skies, and ravish'd Charles from thence  
As heaven itself is took by violence.

And afterwards mentions one of the most awful passages of Sacred History.  
Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted ; as :

For by example most we sinn'd before,  
And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with frailty bore.

How far he was yet from thinking it necessary to found his sentiments on nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles :

The winds, that never moderation knew,  
Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew :  
Or, out of breath with joy, could not enlarge  
Their straiten'd lungs—  
It is no longer motion cheats your view ;  
As you meet it, the land approacheth you ;  
The land returns, and in the white it wears  
The marks of penitence and sorrow bears.

I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed  
A French poet read to Malherbe some verses, in which he represents France as  
moving out of its place to receive the king. "Though this," said Malherbe,  
"-was in my time, I do not remember it."

His poem on *The Coronation* has a more even tenor of thought. Some lines  
deserve to be quoted :

You have already quench'd sedition's brand ;  
And zeal, which burnt it, only warms the land ;  
The jealous sects that dare not trust their cause  
So far from their own will as to the laws,  
You for their umpire and their synod take,  
And their appeal alone to Caesar make.

Here may be found one particle of that old versification, of which, I  
believe, in all his works, there is not another :

Nor it is duty, or our hopes alone,  
Create that joy, but full *fruition*.



In the verses to the Lora Chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeless at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though at last it gives the reader more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtle and comprehensive:

In open prospect nothing bounds our eye,  
 Until the earth seems join'd unto the sky :  
 So in this hemisphere our utmost view  
 Is only bounded by our king and you :  
 Our sight is limited where you are join'd,  
 And beyond that no farther heaven can find.  
 So well your virtues do with his agree,  
 That, though your orbs of different greatness be,  
 Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd,  
 His to enclose, and yours to be enclos'd.  
 Nor could another in your room have been,  
 Except an emptiness had come between.

The comparison of the Chancellor to the Indies leaves all resemblance too far behind it:

And as the Indies were not found before  
 Those rich perfumes which from the happy shore  
 The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,  
 Whose guilty sweetness first their world betray'd;  
 So by your counsels we are brought to view  
 A rich and undiscover'd world in you.

There is another comparison, for there is little else in the poem, of which, though perhaps it cannot be explained into plain prosaic meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obscurity for its magnificence:

How strangely active are the arts of peace,  
 Whose restless motions less than wars do cease !  
 Peace is not freed from labour, but from noise ;  
 And war more force, but not more pains employs.  
 Such is the mighty swiftness of your mind,  
 That, like the earth's, it leaves our sense behind ;  
 While you so smoothly turn and rowl our sphere,  
 That rapid motion does but rest appear.  
 For as in nature's swiftness, with the throng  
 Of flying orbs while ours is borne along,  
 All seems at rest to the deluded eye,

Mov'd by the soul of the same harmony :  
 So carried on by your unwearied care,  
 We rest in peace, and yet in motion share.

To this succeed four lines, which perhaps afford Dryden's first attempt at those penetrating remarks on human nature, for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed :

Let envy them those crimes within you see,  
 From which the happy never must be free ;  
 Envy that does with misery reside,  
 The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride.

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his powers ; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmalleable thoughts ; but as a specimen of his abilities to unite the most unsociable matter, he has concluded with lines of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning :

Yet unimpaired with labours, or with time,  
 Your age but seems to a new youth to climb.  
 Thus heavenly bodies do our time beget,  
 And measure change, but share no part of it :  
 And still it shall without a weight increase,  
 Like this new year, whose motions never cease.  
 For since the glorious course you have begun  
 Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,  
 It must both weightless and immortal prove,  
 Because the centre of it is above.

In the *Annus Mirabilis* he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally quitted, perhaps from this experience of its inconvenience, for the complains of its difficulty. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the Fire of London. Battles have always been described in heroic poetry ; but a sea-fight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them ; for they borrow everything from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life. Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder. We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images. Waller had described a sea-fight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of Waller's poem on the war with Spain ; perhaps such a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on the civil war of Rome, "*Orbem jam totum,*" etc.

Of the King collecting his navy, he says :

It seems as every ship their sovereign knows,  
His awful summons they so soon obey ;  
So hear the scaly herds when Proteus blows,  
And so to pasture follow through the sea.

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two first lines seriously, and that some wag had added the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed indecently hyperbolic, but certainly in a mode totally different?

To see this fleet upon the ocean move,  
Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies ;  
And heaven as if there wanted lights above,  
For tapers made two glaring comets rise.

The description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very complete specimen of the descriptions in this poem :

And how approach'd their fleet from India, fraught  
With all the riches of the rising sun :  
And precious sand from southern climates brought  
(The fatal regions where the war begun)  
Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,  
Their way-laid wealth to Norway's coast they bring :  
There first the North's cold bosom spices bore,  
And winter brooded on the eastern spring.  
By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,  
Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert lie ;  
And round about their murdering cannon lay,  
At once to threaten and invite the eye.  
Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,  
The English undertake th' unequal war :  
Seven ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,  
Besiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.

These fight like husbands, but like lovers those :  
 These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy ;  
 And to such height their frantic passion grows,  
 That what both love, both hazard to destroy.  
 Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball,  
 And now their odours arm'd against them fly :  
 Some precious by shatter'd porcelain fall,  
 And some by aromatic splinters die.  
 And, though by tempests of the prize bereft,  
 In heaven's inclemency some ease we find :  
 Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour left,  
 And only yielded to the seas and wind.

In this manner is the sublime too often mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch seek a shelter for a wealthy fleet ; this surely needed no illustration ; yet they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind on the same occasion, but "like hunted castors" ; and they might with strict propriety be hunted ; for we winded them by our noses—their *perfumes* betrayed them. The Husband and the Lover, though of more dignity than the Castor, are images too domestic to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry.

The night comes on, we eager to pursue  
 The combat still, and they ~~asham'd~~ to leave ;  
 'Till the last streaks of dying day withdrew,  
 And doubtful moon-light did our rage deceive.  
 In th' English fleet each ship resounds with joy,  
 And loud applause of their great leader's fame :  
 In fiery dreams the Dutch they still destroy,  
 And, slumbering, smile at the imagin'd flame  
 Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and done,  
 Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen lie ;  
 Faint sweats all down their mighty members run  
 (Vast bulks, which little souls but ill supply).  
 In dreams they fearful precipices tread,  
 Or, shipwreck'd, labour to some distant shore :  
 Or, in dark churches, walk among the dead ;  
 They wake with horror, and dare sleep no more.

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak an universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge ; and of this kind,

certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion that a sea-fight ought to be described in the nautical language; "and certainly," says he, "as those who in a logical dispute keep in general terms would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in any poetical description would veil their ignorance."

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at last we learn as well what will please as what will profit. In the battle, his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

So here, some pick out bullets from the side,  
 Some drive old *oakum* through each *seam* and rift:  
 Their left-hand does the *calking-iron* guide,  
 The *rattling mallet* with the right they lift  
 With boiling pitch another near at hand  
 (From friendly Sweden brought) the *seams instops*;  
 Which, well paid o'er, the salt-sea waves withstand,  
 And shake them from the rising beak in drops.  
 Some the *gall'd* ropes with dauby *marling* bind,  
 Or sea-cloth masts with strong *tarpawling* coats:  
 To try new *shrouds* one mounts into the wind,  
 And one below their ease or stiffness notes

I suppose there is not one term which every reader does not wish away. His digression to the original and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says that, by the help of the philosophers:

Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,  
 By which remotest regions are allied.

Which he is constrained to explain in a note "by a more exact measure of longitude." It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured science into poetry, and have shown by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet; he watches the flame coolly from street to street, with now a reflection, and now a simile, till at last he meets the King, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention ; as in the beginning :

The diligence of trades, and noiseful gain,  
 And luxury, more late, asleep were laid !  
 All was the Night's, and in her silent reign  
 No sound the rest of Nature did invade  
 In this deep quiet . . . .

The expression "All was the Night's" is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

*Omnia noctis erant, placida composta quiete,*

that he might have concluded better,

*Omnia noctis erant.*

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated :

The ghosts of traitors from the Bridge descend  
 With bold fanatic spectres to rejoice ;  
 About the fire into a dance they bend,  
 And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice.

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical, and with an event which poets cannot always boast has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From this time he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, "to which," says he, "my genius never much inclined me," merely as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme, he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of Harte, who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of *Aureng Zebe* ; and according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote *Tyrannic Love*, and the *State of Innocence*, he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its effects upon the passions of an audience ; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are therefore easily selected and retained. Thus the description of Night in the *Indian Emperor*, and the rise and fall of empire in the *Conquest of Granada*,

are more frequently repeated than any lines in *All for Love*, or *Don Sebastian*.

To search his plays for vigorous sallies and sententious elegances, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatic labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a preface to the *English Epistles of Ovid*, one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the Earl of Mulgrave.

*Absalom and Achitophel* is a work so well known that particular criticism is superfluous. If it be considered as a poem political and controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellences of which the subject is susceptible—acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of sentiments, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers—and all these raised to such a height as can scarcely be found in any other English composition.

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject had likewise another inconvenience: it admitted little imagery or description; and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious: though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interposition of something that soothes the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

As an approach to the historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is, therefore, an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed of many sects, various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief, formidable for their numbers, and strong by their supports; while the King's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set forth to view; but, when expectation is at the height, the King makes a speech, and

Henceforth a series of new times began.

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass, which vanishes at once into air when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part, written by Tate, there is a long insertion, which, for its poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

*The Medal*, written upon the same principles with *Absalom and Achitophel*, but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers

equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas as a series of events or multiplicity of agents. This poem, therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood; yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensities to mischief are such that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured:

Power was his aim; but, thrown from that pretence,  
 The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,  
 And malice reconcil'd him to his prince.  
 Him, in the anguish of his soul, he serv'd;  
 Rewarded faster still than he deserv'd:  
 Behold him now exalted into trust;  
 His counsels oft convenient, seldom just;  
 Ev'n in the most sincere advice he gave,  
 He had a grudging still to be a knave.  
 The frauds he learnt in his fanatic years  
 Made him uneasy in his lawful gears,  
 At best as little honest as he could,  
 And, like white witches, mischievously good.  
 To his first bias, longingly, he leans;  
 And rather would be great by wicked means

The *Threnodia*, which, by a term I am afraid neither authorised nor analogical, he calls *Augustalis*, is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity, it is neither magnificent nor pathetic. He seems to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. "He is," he says, "petrified with grief," but the marble sometimes relents and trickles in a joke.

The sons of art all med'cines tried,  
 And every noble remedy applied;  
 With emulation each essay'd;  
 His utmost skill; *nay, more, they pray'd*:  
 Never was losing game with better conduct play'd.

He has been a little inclined to merriment before upon the prayers of a nation for their dying sovereign; nor was he serious enough to keep heathen fables out of his religion:

With him th' innumerable crowd of armed prayers  
 Knock'd at the gates of heaven, and knock'd aloud;



*The first well-meaning rude petitioners*

All for his life assail'd the throne,  
All would have brib'd the skies by offering up their own.  
So great a throng not heaven itself could bar ;  
'Twas almost borne by force, *as in the giants' war*.

The pray'rs, at least, for his reprieve were heard ;  
His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd.

There is throughout the composition a desire of splendour without wealth. In the conclusion he seems too much pleased with the prospect of the new reign to have lamented his old master with much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt for want of skill either in lyric or elegiac poetry. His poem on the death of Mrs. Killigrew is undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced. The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm. "*Fervet immensusque ruit*" All the stanzas indeed are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first *Ode for Ceciliæ's Day*, which is lost in the splendour of the second, there are passages which would have dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word *diapason* is too technical, and the rhyme are too remote from one another.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,

This universal frame began :

When Nature underneath a heap

Of jarring atoms lay,

And could not heave her head,

The tuneful voice was heard from high.

Arise, ye more than dead.

Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,

In order to their stations leap,

And Music's power obey.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,

This universal frame began :

From harmony to harmony

Through all the compass of the notes it ran,

The diapason closing full in man

The conclusion is likewise striking, but it includes an image so awful in itself that it can owe little to poetry ; and I could wish the antithesis of *music untuning* had found some other place :

As from the power of sacred lays

The spheres began to move,

And sung the great Creator's praise

To all the bless'd above :  
 So when the last and dreadful hour  
 This crumbling pageant shall devour,  
 The trumpet shall be heard on high,  
 The dead shall live, the living die,  
 And Music shall untune the sky.

Of his skill in elegy he has given a specimen in his *Eleonora* of which the following lines discover their author :

Though all these rare endowments of the mind  
 Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,  
 The figure was with full perfection crown'd ;  
 Though not so large an orb, as truly round :  
 As when in glory, through the public place,  
 The spoils of conquer'd nations were to pass,  
 And but one day for triumph was allow'd,  
 The consul was constrain'd his pomp to crowd ;  
 And so the swift procession hurried on,  
 That all, though not distinctly, might be shown :  
 So in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,  
 She gave but glimpses of her glorious mind :  
 And multitudes of virtues pass'd along,  
 Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng,  
 Ambitious to be seen, and then make room  
 For greater multitudes that were to come.  
 Yet unemployed no minute slipp'd away ;  
 Moments were precious in so short a stay.  
 The haste of Heaven to have her was so great,  
 That some were single acts, though each complete ;  
 And every act stood ready to repeat.

This piece, however, is not without its faults ; there is so much likeness in the initial comparison that there is no illustration. As a king would be lamented, *Eleonora* was lamented :

As, when some great and gracious monarch dies,  
 Soft whispers, first, and mournful murmurs, rise  
 Among the sad attendants ; then the sound  
 Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,  
 Through town and country, till the dreadful blast  
 Is blown to distant colonies at last,  
 Who then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain  
 For his long life, and for his happy reign,  
 So slowly by degrees unwilling fame

Did marchless Eleonora's fate proclaim,  
Till public as the loss the news became.

This is little better than to say in praise of shrub that it is as green as a tree; or a brook that it waters a garden as a river waters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know the lady whom he celebrates; the praise being therefore inevitably general, fixes no impression upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to love, nor much desire of imitation. Knowledge of the subject is to the poet what durable materials are to the architect.

The *Religio Laici*, which borrows its title from the *Religio Medici* of Browne, is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion; in this, therefore, it might be hoped that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But unhappily the subject is rather argumentative than poetical: he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation:

And this unpolish'd rugged verse I chose,  
As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very improperly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous, in which metre has neither weakened the force nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; for will it be easy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaic in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind, or not far distant from it, is the *Hind and the Panther*, the longest of all Dryden's original poems—an allegory intended to comprise and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious; for what can be more absurd than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council? He seems well enough skilled in the usual topics of argument, endeavours to show the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to ask, why, since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where?

The Hind at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried; but, walking home with the Panther, talks by the way of the Nicene Fathers, and at last declares herself to be the Catholic Church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in the *Country Mouse and the City Mouse* of Montague and Prior; and in the detection and censure of the incongruity of the fiction chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems, to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whose judgement was perhaps a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may, therefore, reasonably infer that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph.

A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,  
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest rang'd :  
Without unspotted, innocent within,  
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.  
Yet had she oft been chas'd with horns and hounds,  
And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds  
Aim'd at her heart ; was often forc'd to fly,  
And doom'd to death, though fated not to die.

These lines are lofty, elegant, and musical, notwithstanding the interruption of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety, than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, "to give the majestic turn of heroic poesy ;" and perhaps he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a Presbyterian, whose emblem is the wolf, is not very heroically majestic :

More haughty than the rest, the wolfish race	}
Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd face :	
Never was so deform'd a beast of grace.	}
His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,	
Close clapp'd for shame ; but his rough crest he rears,	
And pricks up his predestination ears.	

His general character of the other sorts of beasts that never go to church, though sprightly and keen, has, however, not much of heroic poesy :

These are the chief : to number o'er the rest,  
And stand, like Adam, naming every beast,  
Were weary work ; nor will the Muse describe  
A slimy born and sun-begotten tribe,  
Who, far from steepless and their sacred sound,  
In fields their sullen conventicles found.  
These gross, half-animated lumps I leave ;  
Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive ;

But, if they think at all, 'tis sure no higher  
 Than matter, put in motion, may aspire;  
 Souls that can scarce ferment their mass of clay;  
 So drossy, so divisible are they,  
 As would but serve pure bodies for allay;  
 Such souls as shards produce, such beetle things  
 As only buzz to Heaven with evening wings;  
 Strike in the dark, offending but by chance;  
 Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.  
 They know not beings, and but hate a name;  
 To them the Hind and Panther are the same.

}

One more instance, and that taken from the narrative part, where style was more in his choice, will show how steadily he kept his resolution of heroic dignity:

For when the herd, suffic'd, did late repair  
 To feiny heathes and to their forest lair,  
 She made a mannerly excuse to stay,  
 Proffering the Hind to wait her half the way:  
 That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk  
 Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.  
 With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,  
 To chat awhile on their adventures past:  
 Nor had the grateful Hind so soon forgot  
 Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the plot.  
 Yet, wondering how of late she grew estrang'd,  
 Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,  
 She thought this hour th' occasion would present  
 To learn her secret cause of discontent,  
 Which well she hop'd might be with ease redress'd,  
 Considering her a well-bred, civil beast,  
 And more a gentlewoman than the rest.  
 After some common talk what rumours ran,  
 The lady of the spotted muff began.

}

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced to diction more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation; the difference is not, however, very easily perceived; the first has familiar, and the two others have sonorous, lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole; the King is now Caesar and now the Lion; and the name Pan is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controversy is

embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions, are made are now become obscure, and perhaps there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably laboured with uncommon attention, and there are, indeed, few negligences in the subordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the subsequent unpopularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, has sunk it into neglect; but it may be usefully studied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument suffers little from the metre.

In the poem on *The Birth of the Prince of Wales* nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and that insensibility of the precipice on which the King was then standing, which the laureate apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from court, and made him again a playwright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton, and another by Holyday; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth, and Holyday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes. A new version was proposed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputation was such that no man was unwilling to serve the Muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given when it is said to preserve the wit, but to want the dignity, of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be limited, except Creech, who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is therefore, perhaps, possible to give a better representation of that great satirist, even in those parts which Dryden himself has translated, some passages except, which will never be excelled.

With Juvenal was published Persius, translated wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all other productions of Dryden it may have shining parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry, that one of these satires is an exercise of the school. Dryden says that he once translated it at school; but not that he preserved or published the juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook, perhaps, the most arduous work of its kind, a translation of Virgil, for which he had shown how well he was qualified by his version of the *Pollio*, and two episodes, one of *Nisus and Euryalus*, the other of *Mezentius and Lausus*.

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the discriminative excellence of Homer is elevation and comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil is grace and splendour of diction. The beauties of Homer are therefore difficult to be lost, and those of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunk of sentiment

is safe by its solidity, but the blossoms of elocution easily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which he can best adorn; the translator must, at all hazards, follow his original, and express thoughts which perhaps he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the *Georgics* and the *Æneid* should be much delighted with any version.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the public were not disappointed. He produced, says Pope, "the most noble and spirited translation I know in any language." It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends, and, for the most part, to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the Preface, Pastorals, and *Georgics*; and as he professes to give his antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals, and the first *Georgic*. The world has forgotten his book; but since his attempt has given him a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism, by inserting his remarks on the invocation before the first *Georgic*, and of his poetry, by annexing his own version.

'What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn  
The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn.'—*Ver. I.*

It's *unlucky*, they say, to *stumble at the threshold*, but what has a *plenteous harvest* to do here? Virgil would not pretend to prescribe *rules* for *that* which depends not on the *husbandman's* care, but the *disposition of Heaven* altogether. Indeed, the *plenteous crop* depends somewhat on the *good method of tillage*, and where the *land's* ill manured, the *corn*, without a miracle, can be but *indifferent*; but the harvest may be *good*; which is its *properest* epithet, though the *husbandman's skill* were never so *indifferent*. The next sentence is *too literal*, and when to plough had been Virgil's meaning, and intelligible to everybody; and *when to sow the corn* is a needless addition.

'The care of sheep, of oxen, and of kine,  
And when to geld the lambs, and sheer the swine,'—*Ver. 3*

would as well have fallen under the *cura boum, quis cultus habendo sit pecori*, as Mr. D.'s *deduction of particular*.

'The birth and genius of the fruitful bee  
I sing, Maecenas, and I sing to thee.'—*Ver.* 5.

But where did *experientia* ever signify *birth and genius*? or what ground was there for such a *figure* in this place? How much more manly is Mr. Ogilby's version!

'What makes rich grounds, in what celestial signs  
'Tis good to plough, and marry elms with vines;  
What best fits cattle, what with sheep agrees,  
And several arts improving frugal bees;  
I sing, Maecenas.'

Which four lines, th' faulty enough, are yet much more to the purpose than Mr. D.'s six.

'From fields and mountains to my song repair.'—*Ver.* 22.

*For patrium linquens nemus, saltusque Lycae*—Very well explain'd!

'Inventor, Pallas, of the fattening oil,  
Thou founder of the plough, and plough-man's toil!'—*Ver.* 23, 24.

Written as if *these* had both been *Pallas's invention*. *The plough-man's toil's* impertinent.

'... The shroud-like cypress'—*Ver.* 25.

Why *shroud-like*? Is a *cypress* pull'd up by the *roots*, which the *sculpture* in the last *Eclogue* fills *Silvanus's* hand with, so very like a *shroud*? Or did not Mr. D. think of that kind of *cypress* us'd often for *scarves and hat-bands* at funerals formerly, or for *widows' vails*, etc.?—If so, 'twas a deep good thought.

... 'That wear  
The rural honours, and increase the year.'—*Ver.* 26.

What's meant by *increasing the year*? Did the gods or goddesses add more *months*, or *days*, or *hours* to it? Or how can *arva tueri* signify to *wear rural honours*? Is this to *translate* or *abuse* an *author*? The next *couplet* is borrow'd from Ogilby, I suppose, because *less to the purpose* than ordinary:

'The patron of the world, and Rome's peculiar guard.'—*Ver.* 33.

*Idle*, and none of Virgil's, no more than the sense of the *precedent couplet*; so, again, he *interpolates* Virgil with that and *the round circle of the year* to



*guide powerful of blessings, which thou strew'st around. A ridiculous Latinism, and an impertinent addition; indeed the whole period is but one piece of absurdity and nonsense, as those who lay it with the original must find.*

'And Neptune shall resign the fasces of the sea.'

Was he *consul* or *dictator* there?

'And watty virgins for thy bed shall strive.'—*Ver.* 42, 43.

Both absurd *interpolations*.

'Where in the void of heaven a place is free.

*Ab! happy, D——n, were that place for thee!*—*Ver.* 47, 48.

But where is *that void*? Or what does our *translator* mean by it? He knows what Ovid says *God* did to prevent such a *void* in heaven; perhaps this was then forgotten: but Virgil talks more sensibly.

'The scorpion ready to receive thy laws.'—*Ver.* 49.

No, he would not then have *gotten out of his way* so fast.

'Though Proserpine affects her silent seat.'—*Ver.* 56.

What made *her* then so *angry* with Ascalaphus for preventing her return? She was now mus'd to Patience under the *determinations* of Fate, rather than *fond* of her *residence*.

'Pity the poet's and the plough-man's cares,

Interest thy greatness in our mean affairs,

And use thyself betimes to hear our prayers.'—*Ver.* 1, 62, 63. }

Which is such a wretched *perversion* of Virgil's *noble thought* as Vicars would have blush'd at; but Mr. Ogilby makes us some amends by his better lines:

'O wheresoe'er thou art, from thence incline,

And grant assistance to my bold design!

Pity, with me, poor husbandmen's affairs,

And now, as if translated, hear our prayers.

This is *sense*, and *to the purpose*: the other poor *mistaken* stuff."

Such were the strictures of Milbourne, who found few abettors, and of whom it may be reasonably imagined that many who favoured his design were ashamed of his insolence.

When admiration had subsided, the translation was more coolly examined, and found, like all others, to be sometimes erroneous, and sometimes licentious. Those who could find faults thought they could avoid them; and Dr. Brady attempted in blank verse a translation of the *Æneid*, which when

dragged into the world did not live long enough to cry. I have never seen it; but that such a version there is, or has been, perhaps some old catalogue informed me.

With not much better success, Trapp, when his Tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted [1718] another blank version of the *Æneid*; to which, notwithstanding the slight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perseverance enough to add the Eclogues and Georgics. His book may continue its existence as long as it is the clandestine refuge of school-boys.

Since the English ear has been accustomed to the melliflence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid, new attempts have been made to translate Virgil; and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myself in an invidious comparison by opposing one passage to another—a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offensive without use.

It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated, but by their general effects and ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place; to find a happiness of expression in the original, and transplant it by force into the version: but what is given to the parts may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary, though the critic may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurements and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain which the reader throws away. He only is the master who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predominance I will consent that Dryden should be tried; of this, which, in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which, in defiance of criticism, continues Shakespeare the sovereign of the drama.

His last work was his *Fables*, in which he gave us the first example of a mode of writing which the Italians call *rifacimento*, a renovation of ancient writers by modernizing their language. Thus the old poem of Boiardo has been new-dressed by Domenichi and Berni. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuvenescence has been bestowed by Dryden, require little criticism. The tale of the Cock seems hardly worth revival; and the story of Palamon and Arcite, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolic commendation which Dryden has given it in the general Preface, and in a poetical Dedication, a piece where his original fondness of remote conceits seems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace, *Sigismunda* may be defended by the celebrity of the story. *Theodore and Honoria*, thought it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of striking description. And *Cymon*

was formerly a tale of such reputation, that at the revival of letters it was translated into Latin by one of the Beroalds.

Whatever subjects employed his pen, he was still improving our measures and embellishing our language.

In this volume are interspersed some short original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and songs, may be comprised in Congreve's remark, that even those, if he had written nothing else, would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in his kind.

One composition must however be distinguished. The *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has always considered as exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand without a rival. If indeed there is any excellence beyond it in some other of Dryden's works, that excellence must be found. Compared with the *Ode on Killigrew*, it may be pronounced perhaps superior in the whole; but without any single part equal to the first stanza of the other.

It is said to have cost Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences; some of the lines are without correspondent rhymes; a defect which I never detected but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthusiasm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His last stanza has less emotion than the former; but it is not less elegant in the diction. The conclusion is vicious; the music of Timotheus, which *raised a mortal to the skies*, had only a metaphorical power; that of Cecilia, which *drew an angel down*, had a real effect: the crown therefore could not reasonably be divided.

In a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments not such as nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he says of love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

Love various minds does variously inspire;  
It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire,  
Like that of incense on the altar laid:  
But raging flames tempestuous souls invade;  
A fire which every windy passion blows,  
With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows.

Dryden's was not one of the *gentle bosoms*: Love as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent

kindness; such Love as shuts out all other interest, the Love of the Golden Age, was too soft and subtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties; when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

He is therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetic; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure; and for the first part of his life he looked on Orway with contempt, though at last, indeed very late, he confessed that in his play *there was Nature, which is the greatest beauty*.

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, then a servile submission to an injudicious audience, that filled his plays with false magnificence. It was necessary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection, or by curiosity; by reviving natural sentiments, or impressing new appearances of things: sentences were readier at his call than images; he could more easily fill the ear with splendid novelty, then awaken those ideas that slumber in the heart.

The favourite exercise of his mind was ratiocination; and, that argument might not be too soon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and necessity, destiny and contingency; these he discusses in the language of the school with so much profundity, that the terms which he uses are not always understood. It is indeed learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himself in disputation, thoughts flowed in on either side: he saw now no longer at a loss; he had always objections and solutions at command: "*verbaque provisam rem*"—give him matter for his verse, and he finds without difficulty verse for his matter.

In comedy, for which he professes himself not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will perhaps not be found so much to raise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely distinguished and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprises; from jests of action rather than of sentiment. What he had humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but from other poets; if not always as a plagiarist, at least as an imitator.

Next no argument, his delight was in wild and daring sallies of sentiment, in the irregular and eccentric violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy. This inclination sometimes produced nonsense, which he knew, as:

Move swiftly, Sun, and fly a lover's pace,  
Leave weeks and months behind thee in thy race.

Amariel flies

To guard thee from the demons of the air;

My flaming sword above them to display,  
All keen, and ground upon the edge of day.

And sometimes it issued in absurdities, of which perhaps he was conscious :

Then upon our orb's last verge shall go,  
And see the ocean leaning on the sky ;  
From thence our rolling neighbours we shall know,  
And on the lunar world securely pry.

These lines have no meaning ; but may we not say, in imitation of Cowley on another book :

'Tis so like *sense*, 'twill serve the turn as well ?

This endeavour after the grand and the new produced many sentiments either great or bulky, and many images either just or splendid :

I am as free as Nature first made man, Ere the base laws of servitude began, When wild in woods the noble savage ran.	}
—'Tis but because the Living death ne'er knew, They fear to prove it as a thing that's new : Let me th' experiment before you try, I'll show you first how easy 'tis to die. —There with a forest of their darts he strove, And stood like <i>Capaneus</i> defying Jove, With his broad sword the boldest beating down. While Fate grew pale lest he should win the town, And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark book To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook. —I beg no pity for this mouldering clay ; For if you give it burial. there it takes Possession of your earth ; If burnt, and scatter'd in the air, the winds That strew my dust diffuse my royalty, And spread me o'er your clime ; for where one atom Of mine shall light, know there Sebastian reigns.	

Of these quotations the two first may be allowed to be great, the two latter only tumid.

Of such selection there is no end. I will add only a few more passages ; of which the first, though it may perhaps be quite clear in prose, is not too obscure for poetry, as the meaning that it has is noble :

No, there is a necessity in Fate,  
Why still the brave bold man is fortunate ;

He keeps his object ever full in sight,  
 And that assurance holds him firm and right;  
 True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliss,  
 But right before there is no precipice;  
 Fear makes men look aside, and so their footing miss.

}

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the first is elegant, the second magnificent; whether either be just, let the reader judge:

What precious drops are these,  
 Which silently each other's track pursue,  
 Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew?  
 . . . Resign your castle  
 —Enter, brave Sir; for when you speak the word,  
 The gates shall open of their own accord;  
 The genius of the place its Lord shall meet,  
 And bow its towery forehead at your feet

These bursts of extravagance Dryden calls the "Dalilahs of the Theatre;" and owns that many noisy lines of Maxamin and Almanzor call out for vengeance upon him; "but I knew," says he, "that they were bad enough to please, even when I writ them." There is surely reason to suspect that he pleased himself as well as his audience; and that these, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had sometimes faults of a less generous and splendid kind. He makes, like almost all other poets, very frequent use of mythology, and sometimes connects religion and fable too closely without distinction.

He descends to display his knowledge with pedantic ostentation; as, when, in translation Virgil, he says "tack to the larboard"—"ever starboard;" and talks, in another work, of "Virtue spooming before the wind." His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

They Nature's king through Nature's optics view'd:  
 Revers'd, they view'd him lessen'd to their eyes.

He had heard of reversing a telescope, and unluckily reverses the object.

He is sometimes unexpectedly mean. When he describes the Supreme Being as moved by prayer to stop the Fire of London, what is his expression?

A hollow crystal pyramid he takes,  
 In firmamental waters dipt above,  
 Of it a bored *extinguisher* he makes,  
 And *hoods* the flames that to their quarry strove.

When he describes the Last Day, and the decisive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

When rattling bones together fly  
 From the four quarters of the sky.

It was indeed never in his power to resist the temptation of a jest. In his *Elegy on Cromwell* :

No sooner was the Frenchman's cause embrac'd,  
Than the *light Monsieur* the *grave* Don outweigh'd ;  
His fortune turn'd the scale—

He had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to show, as may be suspected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the use of French words, which had then crept into conversation such as *fraicheur* for *coolness*, *fougue* for *turbulence*, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovators.

These are his faults of affectation ; his faults of negligence are beyond recital. Such is the unevenness of his compositions, that ten lines are seldom found together without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages ; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched in haste what was within his reach ; and when he could content others, was himself contented. He did not keep present to his mind an idea of pure perfection ; nor compare his works, such as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he should be opposed. He had more music than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley ; and from his contemporaries he was in no danger. Standing therefore in the highest place, he had no care to rise by contending with himself ; but, while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the easiest terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought sufficient he did not stop to make better ; and allowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he dismissed from his thoughts ; and I believe there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The hastiness of his production might be the effect of necessity ; but his subsequent neglect could hardly have any other cause than impatience of study.

What can be said of his versification will be little more than a dilatation of the praise given it by Pope :

Waller was smooth ; but Dryden taught to join	}
The varying verse, the full-resounding line,	
The long majestic march, and energy divine.	

Some improvements had been already made in English numbers ; but the full force of our language was not yet felt ; the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had sometimes a finished line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to choose the flowing and the sonorous words, to

vary the pauses, and adjust the accents, to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre.

Of triplets and Alexandrines, though he did not introduce the use, he established it. The triplet has long subsisted among us. Dryden seems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's Homer; but it is to be found in Phaer's Virgil, written in the reign of Mary, and in Hall's *Satires*, published five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The Alexandrine was, I believe, first used by Spenser, for the sake of closing his stanza with a fuller sound. We had a longer measure of fourteen syllables, into which the Æneid was translated by Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers, of which Chapman's Iliad was, I believe, the last.

The two first lines of Phaer's third Æneid will exemplify this measure :

When Asia's state was overthrown, and Priam's kingdom stout,  
All guiltless, by the power of gods above was rooted out.

As these lines had their break, or *caesure*, always at the eighth syllable, it was thought, in time, commodious to divide them : and quatrains of lines, alternately, consisting of eight and six syllables, and make the most soft and pleasing of our lyric measures, as :

Relentless Time, destroying power,  
Which stone and brass obey,  
Who giv'st to ev'ry flying hour  
To work some new decay.

In the Alexandrine, when its power was once felt, some poems, as Drayton's *Polyolbion*, were wholly written; and sometimes the measures of twelve and fourteen syllables were interchanged with one another. Cowley was the first that inserted the Alexandrine at pleasure among the heroic lines of ten syllables, and from him Dryden professes to have adopted it.

The triplet and Alexandrine are not universally approved. Swift always censured them, and wrote some lines to ridicule them. In examining their propriety, it is to be considered that the essence of verse is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verse is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule—a rule, however, lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and spondees differently combined; the English heroic admits of acute or grave syllables variously disposed. The Latin never deviates into seven feet, or exceeds the number of seventeen syllables; but the English Alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and surprises the reader with two syllables more than he expected.

The effect of the triplet is the same; the ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet, but is on a sudden surprised with three rhymes



together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice ; did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces of the margins. Surely there is something unskilful in the necessity of such mechanical direction.

Considering the metrical art simply as a science, and consequently excluding all casualty, we must allow that triplets and Alexandrines, inserted by caprice, are interruptions of that constancy to which science aspires. And though the variety which they produce may very justly be desired, yet, to make our poetry exact, there ought to be some stated mode of admitting them.

But till some such regulation can be formed, I wish them still to be retained in their present state. They are sometimes convenient to the poet. Fenton was of opinion that Dryden was too liberal, and Pope too sparing, in their use.

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly just, and he valued himself for his readiness in finding them ; but he is sometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the second line with a weak or grave syllable :

Together o'er the Alps methings we fly,  
Fir'd with ideas of fair *Italy*.

POPE, *Epistle to Jervas*.

Dryden sometimes puts the weak rhyme in the first :

Laugh, all the powers that favour *tyranny*,  
And all the standing army of the sky

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the first line of a couplet, which, though the French seem to do it without irregularity, always displeases in English poetry.

The Alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It invariably requires a break at the sixth syllable ; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden sometimes neglected :

And with paternal thunder vindicates his throne.

Of Dryden's works it was said by Pope, that "he could select from them better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply." Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of moëls. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught "*sapere et fari*," to think naturally and express forcibly. Though Davies has reasoned in rhyme before him, it may be perhaps maintained that he was the first who joined

argument with poetry. He showed us the true bounds of a translation. What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied to our easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, "lateritiam munit, marmoream reliquit." He found it brick, and he left it marble.

















